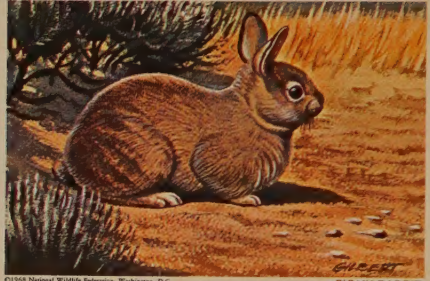
HILL COUNTRY

RAMSEY BENSON



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HILL COUNTRY

The Story of J. J. Hill and the Awakening West

BY

RAMSEY BENSON

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I

"These are the Gardens of the Desert, these
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
For which the speech of England has no name—
The Prairies."

HILL COUNTRY

I

1

NOT a hill anywhere. A country so flat that in the spring of a wet year the melting snows and early rains linger for weeks undecided whether they will drain off to the east or the west—eastward into the Minnesota River, so to be started on their way to the Gulf of Mexico, or westward into the Bois de Sioux, whose waters fall at length into Hudson Bay.

In 1880 a treeless, trackless plain where nobody lived as yet. It was the 10th of June in that year when Pick Overturf, four days out from the last sight of woods, drew up with his prairie-schooner to let his horses drink from a kind of slough formed by the backwash of a sedgy little stream.

Pick edged out along the tongue of the wagon to loosen the checks, and while the horses drank he took a look about.

What he beheld was a monotony as of the sea in a calm, but the monotony wasn't what affected him most, if indeed it affected him any. "Nary a tree to grub out and I reckon a body could plow a furrer a mile long and not strike a rock as big as a hen's egg," he remarked, with a gratified air.

His wife peered out through the flaps of the cover. "Ponies about tuckered?" she asked, her face clouded with kindly solicitude.

A hundred yards or so behind, a barefoot girl was urging forward a reluctant cow and calf. "They won't come—they wanter stop an' eat!" she protested, shrilly.

"Good reason why," Pick chuckled. "It's the best grass they've tasted since they left Ashtabula County."

Having drunk their fill, the horses started to wade across the stream, but Pick reined them about and up the slope of the gentlest of gentle ground-swells. "Anyhow, it's a good place to camp—we'll stop here—onhitch!" he directed and proceeded to execute his own orders.

Disburdened of their harness the horses fell upon the lush herbage voraciously. Pick kicked up a patch of the sod. "Black as tar," he muttered, and his bronzed face lighted up.

Mrs. Overturf climbed down clumsily. "Weese," she called, "you come and look after the baby while I git supper."

Weese was the girl back with the cattle, and without waiting to be bidden twice she left them to their own devices.

Pick fetched a few sticks of dry kindling from a supply stowed compactly away in the wagon and started a fire.

"What be we goin' to do when the wood's gone?" speculated Mrs. Overturf, placidly.

With a sweep of his hand Pick pointed to a wire-grass bog off to the north—outlined against the solid upland by the paler green of its growth.

"There's enough peat in that there marsh," he declared, "to last a thousand families a thousand years."

His wife opened her eyes thoughtfully—perhaps a little skeptically.

"I've heard tell about peat, but I never did see any. I wonder if it'll burn."

"Burn?" sniffed Pick. "Huh!"

The woman gazed out over the prairie and there was nothing to hinder between her and the straight rim where the earth and sky came together.

"The wind gits a sweep here in winter," she commented.

But if by that she meant to raise up an objection she didn't press the point. Delaying no further, she brought out her crock of sour milk for mixing and in short order had a batch of biscuit over the fire. While she waited for the bread to bake she fried slices of salt pork in a skillet with a long handle and withal was not too busy to discover an abundance of dandelion growing.

"I could gether a mess of greens if I had time to boil 'em," she said.

"For dinner to-morrer—they'll go good," said Pick.

He was under the wagon, loosening the rig of chains that held up a plow and a harrow—he got the plow unslung as he spoke and dragged it out. The moldboard was thickly crusted over with rust.

"Dunno if she'll shed or not," he grumbled. "Greased it good afore we started, too."

The woman was watching him.

"Here?" she asked.

"We could go further an' fare wuss," Pick replied.

2

Supper being ready, the family gathered about with the utmost informality, to fish the slices of meat out of the skillet with the only fork in sight and grab up biscuits in their fingers.

"I'll get a mess of greens the first thing in the morning," said Mrs. Overturf, with the air of enjoying the prospect.

There could be no doubt of Pick's enjoyment. "Greens," he said, "will sure go good."

Or of Weese's. "Yum!" said she.

The days were the longest of the year and the sun was still high when they finished eating. Pick harnessed the horses and having hitched them to the plow forthwith broke up a garden-spot. The sod was tough and the horses had to bend to their collars, but the furrows turned neat as a ribbon and they hadn't gone twice around until the mold-board was glistening as bright as a new dollar.

"Black sandy loam—it can't be beat!" exulted Pick.

Mrs. Overturf went rummaging through an ancient chest lashed to the back end of the wagon and dug out of it divers packets of seeds—peas, beans, sweet-corn, pumpkins, melons. These, when Pick had got the garden-spot harrowed down to a smooth bed, the family planted, every member lending a hand, even to the baby, who helped by being so good that none of the others had to stop and look after him.

Toward sunset, the work being done, Pick and Weese tramped out to the wiregrass bog. It was half a mile away, but with the walking so easy the distance seemed only a step.

The wiregrass, though a very vigorous plant, grew scarcely taller than the upland herbage round about, but here and there over the surface of the marsh were patches where great coarse bullrushes sent up their bushy tops as high as a man's head. Treading gingerly, for the bog in spots quaked under their feet, Pick and Weese made their way out and found the patches to be pits four or five feet deep, varying in extent from a few square yards to several acres. In them the rushes had taken root and the way they flourished gave token of rich soil down in the depths somewhere. Some of them were as thick through as Weese's wrist and their woody fiber gave them a certain weight and substantiality.

There were dead and dry stalks among the rushes—the growth of previous years.

"Looks like an armful of them would bake a batch of biscuit—till we can git some peat cut and dried," Pick observed.

Weese wanted to know what had scooped out the pits, with their edges so straight up and down and their floors so level, and Pick hadn't a notion unless it should be wildfire. "If a fire got started in the peat when it was dry nothin' would stop it, only a whale of a big rain. You can see by them edges how deep the peat is. It's been makin' there maybe for a million years—the wiregrass growin' up an' fallin' down year after year an' the top layers packin' the bottom layers closeter an' closeter till it's solid almost like coal."

But the origin of the peat didn't interest Weese so much as the origin of the fires.

"How did the fires ever git started if there didn't nobody ever live here?"

"Lightnin'—most of the wildfires is started by lightnin'," Pick informed her, and Weese made a wry face.

"Does it thunder out here as loud as it did in Ohio?" she asked, with very manifest concern.

Pick reckoned. Weese wished they might keep on till they got to a country where it rained without thundering, or anyway not so loud, and Pick thought they might have to go to the end of the world and then not find it.

On their way back to the camp a garter-snake, scuttling out of Pick's way, narrowly missed Weese's bare foot. She jumped back with a screech.

"Kill him—where's a club!" she cried.

Pick laughed.

"I don't guess you'll find ary club or rock hereabouts. Anyhow we got to learn not to kill snakes. Ain't none of 'em pizen out here. Snakes is good friends to the farmers, too—they destroy mice and rats and such like varmints."

Night had fallen when they got back to the wagon, but a moon not far from full made it almost as light as day. A glorious, calm, mild night, the fit consort of the day in June which the poet celebrates. Up and down the banks of the stream the frogs croaked cozily. It was their fashion of testifying to their contentment. If they had any inkling of what these new arrivals meant to the country they weren't worrying. After all, there was room and to spare.

Weese climbed up under the canvas to go to bed. "I like it—it's so big!" she avowed, sleepily.

3

The Overturfs were the first to take up land within the limits of what is now Gumbo County, Minnesota.

The eastern boundary of the present town of Gumbo is the western boundary of the quarter-section which Pick Overturf homesteaded.

But if they were first, others soon came to bear them company. It was only about a week, in fact, until a second prairie-schooner hove to and came to anchor some distance up the stream, but in plain sight.

Pick wanted to go right over and call. "Maybe they'll know if anybody's been nominated." He meant anybody nominated for President by the Republican National Convention, which was just assembling when they had their last news.

Mrs. Overturf didn't care so much about the political doings of the day, but she was hungry for the sight of a new face. Moreover, the situation being what it was, they ought to make the first call, as a point of good manners.

The newcomers were the Johnstons, from Pennsylvania, the man of Scotch stock, native born but speaking still the broad brogue of his forefathers, the woman a descendant in the fourth or fifth generation from those Hessians whom King George hired to come over and help subdue his unruly colonists and who liked the country so well that they never went back.

The Johnstons were younger people, by ten years or more, than the Overturfs, being well under thirty, with their first baby still an infant in arms.

They had the news that Pick was so eager to hear. He asked about it as soon as the first greetings were over and Johnston could tell him.

"Garfield—they nominated Garfield," the Scotchman made known.

"Garfield!" Pick repeated, with a dazed air.

"Yes—Garfield, of Ohio—a dark horse," Johnston further related.

Pick gasped for breath. "Jim Garfield? Why, he's our Member of Congress an' last winter the Legislater elected him Senator. I've shook hands with him many's the time. Jim Garfield, of Mentor—just over in Lake County. Member of Congress, Senator—an' now he's goin' to be President! Did you ever hear of the likes?"

His amazement speedily gave way to delight, but it wasn't an unmixed delight. "I won't git to vote for him, though—I lost my vote by emigratin'," he lamented.

The Johnstons had brought along a recent copy of the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* containing the speeches and Pick never desisted until he had read every word. There was a very dull and ineffective speech nominating Blaine, of Maine, and Garfield's better speech presenting John Sherman, his compatriot, but much the best of the lot was Roscoe Conkling's speech nominating Grant:

> "You ask what state he hails from
> And our sole reply shall be,
> 'He is from the Appomattox
> And its sour apple-tree!' "

Pick read the famous bit of doggerel out loud and flung up his hat.

"Hooray for old Grant!" he shouted. "I ain't no third termer, but my hat's off to old Grant any day in the week. Who I wanted for President was John Sherman, but if it couldn't be Sherman I dunno nobody else I'd ruther it'd be than Jim Garfield. Tally up another for Ohio!"

4

The country had been surveyed by the Federal Government while yet Minnesota was a territory and the numbers of the ranges, towns and sections were shown on the maps in the land office—the St. Cloud land office for the present until other offices should be established nearer by. But in the absence of landmarks the entryman couldn't very well start out with his metes and bounds and find his claim by them. What he did was to go and take actual possession of the land he wanted, regardless of the maps—with the land under his feet and the proverbial nine points of the law to back him up, the less essential formalities might wait.

There was no crowding and no chance of a dispute unless you were looking for that sort of thing. Pick Overturf came first and took his choice. Johnston came next and had his choice of what was left. Some day, before long, another survey would be run out, the corners would be marked, and every man would know exactly where he stood. If there should be uncertainty in the meanwhile, no difficulty was going to be made of it.

The families weren't long striking up an intimacy. A situation so full of novelty presented plenty of problems to talk about. The sod houses, for instance, that had to be built right away. How about a sod house, anyhow? Neither Overturf nor Johnston had so much as seen such a thing out of a picture and they sat up half the night to discuss ways and means.

"What I don't see—how do you git the durned thing roofed over?" confessed Pick.

"Sure there's got to be rafters or somewhat to hold the roof up," Johnston agreed.

Evidently the roof was going to be the hard part. The walls looked easy, laid up with sod over sod, but the roof—the best they could make of it was that there would have to be poles brought from somewhere and that meant long and laborious journeys back to the wooded country. Rough poles, of course—anything like finished lumber was not to be thought of.

Houses for shelter at once and a supply of fuel to keep them warm and cook their food the coming winter—these were the first concerns. But there were others and next in order of importance and urgency came the plowing. They were too late to put out a crop the present season, but they meant to get their acres ready to sow with wheat as soon as conditions should permit in the spring, and fall plowing was a necessary part of the program.

Overturf hailed from the winter wheat belt and Johnston had never sowed any other kind. To that extent they had their trade to learn over, for nothing but spring wheat could be grown in the Red River Valley. Nevertheless they knew, in a general way, what they were about.

Almost on the heels of the Johnstons came the Colbys and the Catherwoods. They were together, in three wagons, fifteen souls all told, big and little, and though most of them were little, three wagons were none too many to convey them and their goods. Their journey had been much shorter—only from the forests of Wisconsin, where the tussle with the tall timber had been too much for them. To such as they the treeless prairie looked very much like a land of promise and though to some extent bowed and broken in spirit by the grueling toil that had got them no-

where they gathered fresh courage from the prospect of better things and were eager to take up the burden once more.

In their party were two or three ailing babies and these forthwith commanded the sympathetic interest of the two mothers already on the ground and in a manner settled. Mrs. Overturf went the first day with remedies and dainties and Mrs. Johnston wasn't far behind. The German woman had an extraordinary acquaintance with healing herbs. You could hardly find a plant growing that hadn't its uses in the system of medicine traditional with her people. Apart from her knowledge of these simples she had the gift of common sense and a rarely sweet temper, and in after years she was famous far and wide for her ministrations among the sick.

Twenty families homesteaded in Gumbo County before snow flew that year. Yankees without exception, if you employ the term in the broad sense of natives rather than the offspring of any particular stock. The blood of many races flowed in their veins, but they had so much in common—they were all of them born in the United States.

That they were predominantly of English derivation their names went to show—Knox, Barclay, Millspaugh, Rankin, Griggs, Wendell, Worcester, and so forth.

5

Almost the last of the twenty men to take up land was Brother Daniels, a preacher of the Methodist persuasion, who liked nothing so well as to get the neighbors together at a cottage prayer-meeting and harangue them about their sins. His preachments, be-

sides dealing with the most unpopular of subjects, were commonplace and his delivery was tiresome, but the prayer-meetings were always well attended, perhaps out of a sense of duty, but more likely because Sister Daniels, the parson's dame, could sing the old familiar songs so well. She sang and got the neighbors to sing, and, whatever the reason, they went home feeling encouraged and lifted up.

They took turns entertaining the meetings and apart from their religious effect, which might be much or little, these affairs took on a social significance concerning which there could be no doubt. They served to kindle and keep alive, in the face of manifold disheartenments, a community sentiment eminently worth while. For so much at least Gumbo had reason to bless the memory of Brother Daniels.

If he was more courageous than kindly, nevertheless he was universally mourned when, before the end of the second year, a victim of the dread malady which so many in those days were expecting the dry airs of Minnesota to cure, he was gathered to his fathers. His widow sold their farm and went back to end her days in western New York, whence they had come.

Such of those first twenty families as still survive will not recall Brother Daniels without recalling Andy Maguffin as well. Not that they two were the least bit alike, however. Andy was a Maineite and a rough and rugged specimen of a rough and rugged breed. Verily a man with the bark on. His given name was Androscoggin, in honor of that most ancient of logging streams, and he was a logger by trade, though he had come out to Gumbo to be a farmer. His journey

was shorter than anybody's for he had logged last up and down Rum River, in the eastern part of Minnesota, where, he would have you know, the best white pine in the world was to be found and more of it, by God, than could be cut off in a million years.

Andy couldn't say ten words without taking the name of names in vain, though it was so manifestly an unconscious habit that the offense might be in some degree condoned. Indeed, neighbors hadn't known him long until they ceased to think of him as meaning any harm by his profanity. But, however that might be, it was certain that his declaration didn't make him out much of a prophet. Instead of a million only fifteen or twenty years saw the Rum River pineries, whose excellence he had perhaps not overdrawn, wholly exhausted. Though he knew them so well, he hadn't rightly estimated what wonders the methods of his kind might accomplish in the way of wasting natural resources.

Though he could scarcely read and was never seen with a book in his hand, he had yards of poetry at his tongue's end and he declaimed it so dramatically you couldn't help but feel the effect. There were particularly the lines:

> "Oh, the long and weary winter!
> Oh, the cold and cruel winter!
> Ever thicker, thicker, thicker,
> Froze the ice on lake and river."

You had to be pretty much devoid of sensibilities if you didn't chill when Andy repeated that bit of verse.

"Longfeller—the greatest poet in the world!" he

boasted. "He was born in Portland, Maine. So was I. So was Annie Louise Carey—she's the greatest singer in the world."

He wasn't altogether joking, either—in his heart he believed that being born in Portland turned the scale—he was just that vain. Yet many a joke had he that did not spare his own people. "I'm a Maineite, but I'm friendly to the whites!" you heard him aver, as if Maineites were a tribe of savages. Indeed, there were those who thought but little better of them and that fact tended in no wise to dull the edge of the pleasantry.

It was none other than a Minnesota winter, by the way, which Longfellow in his poem described as long and weary and cold and cruel.

Maguffin was the first unmarried man to take up land, a doubtful distinction. But more doubtful still was another—that of bringing the first whisky into the community: two gallons of Kentucky Forty Rod in a wicker demijohn, and inasmuch as he dealt it out with lavish hand he wasn't a great while running foul of Brother Daniels, the bitterest of whose long list of hatreds was that which he bore the Demon Rum. Old man Colby got drunk at the first contact and attended a prayer-meeting in that condition. He had been the preacher's right-hand man, a sort of deacon, and he was just far enough gone in liquor to be unfitted for his usual duties while remaining unaware of his unfitness. In other words, he made a scandalous show of mortal frailty and Brother Daniels was furious.

So furious that he threw prudence to the winds and went right over to accuse Androscoggin Maguffin to his face. But though the preacher was so full of in-

vective that the words were ready to tumble out in a torrent, sooner than he could do any accusing, Andy, who still lived in his wagon, got out the wicker demijohn. That was his notion of showing proper hospitality.

"Have a snifter, elder," he urged genially, and poured a tin cup generously full.

Brother Daniels' wrath just about choked him. "Vicegerent of Satan!" he sputtered and turned on his heel without another word.

Andy refused to take offense, either then or thereafter. The man of God heaped maledictions on his head at every opportunity and without waiting for an opportunity, mentioned him in his sermons and prayers, execrated him in his everyday conversation—in short it was war between them and nothing but war, only that Andy wouldn't hold up his end. He couldn't be got to talk back.

Folks thought it might be his way of exhibiting the greater disrespect, but they were mistaken. Brother Daniels got no better of his malady and presently he was being taken, at shortening intervals, with spells of prostration such that he could not rise from his bed. The spells grew worse, too, and once when such an attack bade fair to end the parson's race straightway, Andy went over and sat up the night through with him and nursed him as tenderly as his own mother might.

The sick man was out of his head much of the time, so that he didn't rightly know who came about him. But in the early morning, as Andy was going away, the patient had a lucid interval.

"Who's that?" he demanded, weakly, staring at Andy's departing back.

"That? Why, that's the vicegerent of Satan," Sister Daniels informed him, a shade roguishly, for her sense of humor was better developed than her husband's.

Though the parson's days were numbered, he so far recovered as to resume his ministry in a fitful way and neighbors detected little if any diminution of his fiery zeal, but they heard no more denunciations hurled at Andy Maguffin. It counted for something, too, that two gallons of whisky couldn't last forever and that when the wicker demijohn had been emptied it was not replenished. Andy always claimed that he could take it or let it alone and if, out of consideration for Brother Daniels' feelings, he chose to let it alone that was a mark to his credit.

6

Maguffin figured likewise in the community's first romance, the Widow Larkin being the party of the other part.

Mistress Larkin didn't arrive in Gumbo until the second spring, when the prairie-schooner was no longer the only means of conveyance. During the summer and fall and winter the little company of adventurers met with experiences many and various, but it wasn't till spring, with its celebrated tendency in such wise to turn the thoughts of young men and others, that they were refreshed by a love affair.

The widow was still in her comely thirties and her force of character was sufficiently attested by her venturing out there alone to take up a homestead. Under the law an unmarried woman might enter a quarter-section and that was what Mistress Larkin did. The

best of the Government land near by had been taken, but she wasn't afraid to go farther back.

She asked no favors. She had some money, nobody knew whether much or little, but anyhow enough to hire the help necessary to get her housed and started.

Not that the item of help bulked as big as it might in her expenditures. Even before she was housed and started, it had begun to be whispered about that Androscoggin Maguffin was doing pretty much everything the widow needed to have done and that he wasn't asking any pay for his services. If at first he made a secret of what he was about, stealing over furtively when he thought the neighbors weren't looking, he grew bolder and more open until anybody with eyes could see. As for the pay, nobody believed he wanted any—there were too many signs going to show that Andy had lost his heart.

Unless the signs were altogether at fault it so stood. Andy Maguffin, the man with the bark on, scornful of sentiment as the confession of a weak character, had been caught in the toils of the tender passion and was the Widow Larkin's willing slave. Whoever heard of a willing slave expecting wages?

The first public building in Gumbo was the schoolhouse, and there Brother Daniels, as long as he lived, preached twice every Sunday. He and Andy were no longer enemies and still they hadn't very much in common, so that it made something of a stir when Andy showed up at the evening services—stir in his own right, but much more because he came as the escort of the Widow Larkin.

The pair were shown to seats well up in front, and that meant an ordeal for them—like running the gaunt-

let. The widow took it rather placidly, but that was her way and if her demeanor fell in any degree short of confirming the neighbors in their conjectures Andy's was thought to make up the deficiency and more, especially when, the sermon being ended, Brother Daniels came down from his pulpit and shook hands with them in an ostentatiously congratulatory manner. Andy certainly acted guilty.

It was observed that the widow held Andy's hat throughout the evening. If that was a custom obtaining only in certain localities, so that some of the neighbors failed to catch the significance of the gesture, others did not, and anyway the romance was deemed so far advanced as to lay the parties properly liable to have fun poked at them. Rude, not to say indelicate, jokes were cracked at their expense, and their fashion of taking the pleasantries, or anyhow Andy's fashion, was another proof.

7

The long and short of it being that the Gumbo country, after ages and ages of solitude, was filling up, and there was in truth a reason. A reason, too, that went beyond the Homestead Act, though Uncle Sam's offer of a free farm to anybody and everybody no doubt played its part. What had served, more than the offer of a free farm easy to till, to start the sudden inflow of population that had brought twenty families in the first few months, was the promise of a railroad. The railroad was bound to open up a new world and these pioneers were the early birds to whom the proverb assigns the first worm. In another figure of speech, they were going to be in on the ground floor.

None of them knew as yet just where the railroad

would strike through, but the track was already laid as far as Fergus Falls, it was understood to be headed for Canada up through the valley of the Red River of the North, and it couldn't miss Gumbo by many miles.

Jim Hill's name, though not a household word as yet, was being spoken. The promise was Jim Hill's and people put faith in it.

II

"Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants . . . ?
Each belongs here or anywhere else just as
much as the well off, just as much as you,
Each has his or her place in the procession."

II

I

ALREADY you heard stories about Hill that made him out a sort of superman, to employ a term that had not as yet come into general currency.

His origins were lowly. Not so many years ago, you were told, he had been a mud-clerk along the river-front in St. Paul. Hearsay so far away from ports of entry left you in some doubt as to just what a mud-clerk did in the world, but at least you were given to understand that as a species he wasn't expected to have the money to buy railroads and having bought them to build them up into vast transcontinental systems of transportation.

Yet Jim Hill was in the way of doing no less. Whether, as some asserted, he had the backing of the enormously rich and powerful bank of Montreal, or, as others would have you believe, the more or less mythical Dutch bondholders had given him their gold to juggle with, or, contrary to the common expectation, he had saved the means out of his salary as a mud-clerk, anyhow he had gained control of the St. Paul & Pacific, the oldest railroad in Minnesota, pretty badly run down and only a small concern at best, but destined under his hand to grow first into the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba, an enterprise of international scope, and at length into the Great Northern that linked up the east with the west and transformed a wilderness into an empire.

The St. Paul & Pacific, when Hill took it over, had a main line extending out from St. Paul in a northwesterly direction to Breckenridge at the Dakota border, and a branch line up along the Mississippi as far as Melrose. About the first thing the new management did was to make the branch line the main line and to extend it, with an expedition that set a record in railroad building, to Fergus Falls.

Always northward. Jim Hill's feeling for the north —he made no concealment of it. "The farther north life is developed, whether animal or vegetable, the more vigorous it is"—that was a saying of his. He was rich and growing richer, but you never heard of him running away to Florida or California to dodge the Minnesota winter. After a while, when his riches had become almost too great to count and he could afford anything that was to be had for money, he bought him a playground, but it was an island in the St. Lawrence River. "Some day," he predicted, "wheat will be sowed and reaped clear up to the Arctic Circle and it will be the best wheat the world ever saw."

He liked the word "North" in the names of his enterprises—as if he found good augury in it.

2

The graders scarcely paused for breath at Fergus and right behind them pressed the tracklayers. They bridged the Otter Tail and their next objective was the Red River beyond the crest of the watershed—a crest and a watershed though only instruments of precision could detect any deviation from the dead-level. They struck the Red at Moorhead, always bearing north. Moorhead, Crookston, Grand Forks, St. Vincent at

the boundary, there to meet the construction-gangs that were working south from Winnipeg.

Daniel Webster, in the ancient days of Fifty-four Forty or Fight, had assured the American people that there was nothing worth owning north of the forty-ninth parallel—it was too cold a country to amount to much. But Jim Hill had other notions. The first locomotive engine ever to toot its whistle in Winnipeg was old No. 10 of the St. Paul & Pacific equipment, and Hill had sent it up there by boat in order that he might push the construction work from both ends—just to show how little the forty-ninth parallel signified in his philosophy. Nor was it long after that until even Daniel Webster would have changed his tune.

The crews passed in sight of Overturf's homestead. A culvert took care of the sedgy little stream and it was just there that the town of Gumbo sprang up.

That was late in the fall and before long the graders had to quit because the ground was frozen so hard. A point, of course, against Hill's beloved north. If he had chosen to build his empire in Mexico, or somewhere south, his men might have worked right through the winter. But with all its drawbacks the north was still his choice—he wanted his empire there and not elsewhere. His men had to wait till spring, and even after spring had thawed the frost out of the ground, the country lay under water for weeks; but they were ready to fall on, the moment conditions permitted, and the way they made the dirt fly was fit subject for an epic.

Weese Overturf and her little brother went out to the right of way to watch the work. When they came back Pick asked them what they saw.

"There was a man that swore at everybody," Weese related, "and when I asked him if he was Jim Hill he got awful red in the face and the other men laughed."

Pick laughed too.

"I don't believe there is any Jim Hill," Weese flung out, petulantly. "He's just like Santy Claus—it's just talk to fool somebody—ther ain't any Santy Claus and ther ain't any Jim Hill."

"Well, whether or no, we got the railroad," chuckled Pick.

3

The rails were laid that far before winter called a halt, and it was a season of rejoicing in Gumbo. Not much was needed to make people laugh these days, for there was laughter in their hearts. The coming of the railroad was a happy release—almost it spelled the difference between freedom and captivity. It meant mail every day—letters in and letters out and papers with the latest news in them. It meant coal to burn instead of peat, and lumber to build with instead of sod—though peat and sod had served the settlers well, they were heartily glad to be done with that fashion. But more than anything else, the coming of the railroad meant an outlet for their wheat.

They had their acres plowed and harrowed and ready for the seeding the next spring. The soil was new and, by every token, of uncommon fertility—there was everything to encourage them in counting upon a big crop of the highest grade. But though their seed should return an hundredfold, without the railroad tenfold or less would profit them as much. Beyond the few bushels which they and their stock could eat, the harvest would be a loss. But with the railroad to con-

vey it out to a hungry world their wheat was as good as gold.

The first lumber delivered in Gumbo went to put up an elevator by the trackside. It was Rum River lumber, by the way—the kind Andy Maguffin spoke of so highly. He identified it by the logmarks that were to be found here and there where the raw ends of the plank had not been squared off. Two-inch stuff a foot wide, laid up flatwise, like brick, without framing and spiked together—no walls less substantial could withstand the pressure of the bins full of wheat. Carload after carload of the planking until the elevator towered so high that in the level environment it could be seen for miles.

Fifty thousand bushels—that was the estimated capacity of the bins.

4

Of course fifty thousand were more bushels of wheat than these early inhabitants would ever raise in a year, but equally of course they weren't going to remain the only inhabitants. New families next spring and every spring, a rather prodigious rush of them until the country should be filled up—that was what everybody confidently counted on. Now that the hardships of the journey thither had been so largely done away with, no less was to be looked for. Everywhere in the older parts of the United States were families out of luck or for other reasons likely to jump at the chance to get a fresh start in the boundless, bustling, booming west—it was such as they that inhabitants expected to see flocking to Gumbo. Their own kind, speaking broadly. Yankees, in a word.

What they weren't in the least prepared for was the

incursion of Swedes. Uncle Sam's promise of free land to anybody and everybody who would come and make use of it, coupled with Jim Hill's promise of a railroad—these two together had been enough to stir up a ferment of interest that didn't stop at the seacoast but spread out across the water to the shores of Europe, so that the discontented among the native stocks were not alone in being affected by it.

The peasantry of Sweden were especially ready to answer the call. Not that their lot was harder, though hard enough, or that they were more venturesome, though they could claim descent from forefathers renowned for deeds of daring; what no doubt had most to do with determining them was the similarity between the climate of the homeland and the climate of Minnesota. The migration had no terrors for them on that score. Whereas the report of the long winters infested with blizzards might be enough to scare others out, the Swedes were undismayed—they were so used to such things that they would be in a manner lost without them. There were Germans no farther away than St. Cloud and St. Peter and New Ulm, and French around Dayton and Mendota, and Swiss in scattered hamlets; but when it came to the settlement of the Red River Valley, where neither hill nor forest interposed any barrier between them and the caves of the north-wind—that was a job for the Swedes.

They didn't shirk or hang back. For every Yankee family that got off the train at Gumbo in the spring of 1881 there were half a dozen families of Swedes. The Swedes brought big families, too—in some of them as many as twelve children. So that if you left

it to a count of heads rather than a count of families, the natives were being still further outdistanced.

5

The first feeling of the Yankees toward the Swedes wasn't necessarily unkind. It regarded them as freaks and fit subjects of ridicule. They were so odd in so many ways that the Yankees couldn't help laughing. But their laughter, though it showed scant respect, had no bitterness in it—at first.

Just why their merriment should presently be mingled with misgivings, and the misgivings should give way to distaste, and the distaste should amount at length to downright aversion—such a development may not be altogether easy to understand at the distance of half a century. Nevertheless it is what took place.

Very likely a prejudice against foreigners, as such, played a part. The old Know Nothing upheaval of a generation earlier had pretty much died down as a political force, but its soul, so to speak, went marching on and nowhere was it more in evidence than among Yankees whose own forebears only a little while back had been foreigners likewise. There were Yankees of that kind in Gumbo and they did their share to set the fashion of regarding the Swedes with sour disfavor.

Furthermore, it couldn't be denied that the Swedes, on their part, gave provocation. They had their faults—it wasn't merely by being odd that they gave offense. Their personal habits were open to objection—frankly, they weren't as clean as they might be. They were sewed up in garments that they had worn con-

tinuously since the previous fall. There were grounds for believing that they never took a bath. They gave off smells. So did the goods they brought with them—great, unsightly, bulging bags that the brakemen kicked off the train without ceremony.

That was the first that onlooking inhabitants saw of them—when the train-hands unceremoniously hustled them off with their belongings, and what counted against them almost more than anything else was their meek submission to these indignities. They resented nothing and so far from gaining esteem by such a lack of spirit, they could hardly have done worse. They forfeited respect by it just when they needed respect most. It had no tendency to get their faults overlooked. By enduring so meekly when the brakemen hustled them and kicked their goods off the train, they created an impression that they couldn't soon live down, be their faults otherwise howsoever venial. A fighting people may smell bad and still not be looked down on. More likely than not, the northmen who anciently had their own way even to the gates of Rome were sewed up in their garments, nevertheless the native stock in those parts saw fit to step lively in extending them welcome. But these other northmen, who were coming to live in Gumbo, asserted no such claim to consideration. Being landed in the midst of their bags, they gazed about them with a frightened, apologetic air that as good as invited the contempt so universally bestowed upon them.

They were still eating the food they had brought with them from Sweden—moldy black bread that a Yankee household would have been ashamed to throw to the dog.

Once the train spewed out six families of Swedes, numbering together more than fifty particularly forlorn souls—homesick, as anybody could see, to the point of sinking down. Yankees knew what it was to be homesick, too, but they had no pity for these exiles. In the party was a hoary patriarch whose sensitive face testified very especially to his anguish, but he wore wooden shoes and onlookers tittered unfeelingly as he scuffed and clattered over the platform.

He made his way to the bags dumped down in a promiscuous heap, and from somewhere in the depths he brought forth, after much rummaging, a block of sod—dirt and grass. The dirt was dry and the grass was dead, and if they weren't a bit of the soil of Sweden onlookers didn't know what they were.

Anyhow, they saw the patriarch bend over the handful of turf and kiss it, and they saw the tears rain down from his dim old eyes. He looked like a priest, and in the manner of a priest at the altar he held up the block of sod while others of the party crowded about and kissed it and wept over it. A woman knelt down. She had a little boy in her arms and when he objected to touching the dirt with his lips she reproached him.

Andy Maguffin chanced to be at the station that day and it fell to him to voice the common thought. "If that's the way they feel, why the hell didn't they stay in Sweden?" he scoffed, harshly.

6

Public land near the town had been pretty well picked over before the Swedes came on the scene, and while there was still no end of room farther back, they did very little homesteading at first. Free land didn't

attract them—railroad land, though they had to pay a price for it, suited them better.

The reason wasn't altogether clear. Another day, with the Yankees so far gone in prejudice that they put the worst construction on everything the Swedes did, their failure to homestead gave rise to some ugly talk, but for the present it was only another singularity. As likely as not, they didn't know any better. It was easy to believe that they didn't know much.

The railroad land was part of a subsidy voted by Congress to the old St. Paul & Pacific before Jim Hill's day. Hill, as everybody knew, never asked for a public grant in aid of his enterprises, and when, by the transfer of the property, these millions of acres fell into his hands he put them on the market at a figure that was hardly more than nominal. Of course he could well afford to do so—he didn't need the money to help build his railroad, and while the sale of land at such a price wasn't going to yield much revenue directly, on the other hand the opportunity to buy cheap had a tendency to bring in population and population was what made paying traffic. Hill couldn't very well match the Government's offer of a free farm—that would be trading at a loss and only the Government could trade at a loss. But what he asked for the land wasn't much.

Whether or not it was because they didn't know any better, the Swedes chose to buy their farms, and that was when the Yankees first learned that the foreigners had brought money with them. Having taken it for granted that these immigrants were eating moldy bread and tainted fish because they were too poor to eat anything better, the Yankees were under a certain necessity

of overhauling their prejudices when they saw the glitter of the actual gold.

By the precedents the glitter of their gold ought to have raised the Swedes in the estimation of their neighbors. Many of these neighbors, perhaps a majority, were New Englanders, Yankees of the undiluted strain, with respect for material means a tradition stronger than almost any other. The Overturfs, for instance, were directly from the Western Reserve of Ohio, but the Western Reserve had been peopled originally by Connecticut families and Pick took his name, by right of lineal descent, from the Timothy Pickering of Massachusetts who was a member of George Washington's cabinet. So, too, Andy Maguffin, in spite of the rough bark which had overgrown the ancestral stem since its removal from the Providence Plantations to Maine—Andy had journeyed far and seen many adventures, but he hadn't cast off that traditional respect for property.

Yet somehow the precedents failed to hold good now—contrary considerations put too strong a strain upon them. Having made up their minds to think ill of the strangers, it was a point of consistency with the Yankees not to be lightly swerved from their resolution. Indeed, they liked better to find a new reproach in the money the Swedes had brought with them. Was not their sordid manner of life more than ever a discredit to them for being a matter of choice and not of necessity?

7

A Swede's money, as it happened, was the cause of action in the first process of law recorded in the annals of the community.

There was no Gumbo County as yet—it could only

be formed by an act of the legislature and the legislature hadn't met since the country began to fill up. But the town of Gumbo might, under the general law governing municipal corporations, set up in business provisionally whenever the qualified voters expressed a wish to do so; and early in March of 1881 an election was held. That was before the big inflow of settlers got fairly under way and the roster of officials chosen pretty nearly exhausted the manpower of the territory affected.

Pickering Overturf was elected to be justice of the peace, and Androscoggin Maguffin constable. Theirs were very ancient offices if not so very important, for there were justices of the peace in England in the days of the Plantagenets and constables in France as early as there were kings.

These functionaries, however, were not once called upon to act in their official capacity till the Swedes came and Christian Hans Hanson missed his money.

Nearly $150 of it—in gold. He had brought it over the ocean quilted into the lining of his pelt coat and it was enough to have made a first payment on the land he bought and put him up a shack where he could live, but he had no more than brought it out of its place of concealment than it was gone. Thinking it might have been by some chance mislaid, he and his people searched high and low, but no trace of it could they find.

Officers of the law knew nothing about the affair until Hanson, or somebody in his behalf, wrote to a lawyer in Alexandria who understood Swedish and was by him instructed to go before a magistrate and lodge a complaint.

Hanson did so without delay. Justice Overturf had been building him a new house of boards and in the unfinished front room, with some attempt at magisterial ceremony, he received Christian Hans and his countrymen to the number of a dozen or so.

The Swedes could speak but little of the justice's language, and the justice could speak still less of theirs, but they had brought along a letter in English from the lawyer and in it the situation was explained. To his no small consternation and distress, Overturf learned that there had been what looked very like a robbery in town. Grand larceny, too,—a felony. Of course it was no such delinquency as might be condoned and overlooked—it was up to him as a court of first instance to take steps to bring the guilty party or parties to book.

He somehow gave the Swedes to understand that he would do his utmost, and when they were gone he sent for Constable Maguffin.

Andy was shingling the Widow Larkin's chicken-house at the moment, but he knocked off and came right over upon being informed of what was in the wind. It was the opportunity he had been looking for. More than once since his election he had been heard to boast, for modesty was none of his failings, that it would have to be a mighty baffling crime which he couldn't run down and a mighty desperate criminal whom he couldn't land behind the bars.

Overturf was at his wit's end and more at loss every minute, but the constable had no sooner been apprised of the facts than he let it be known that he had a theory. "Leave it to me," he bade the uneasy justice. "I can't talk with the critters, but I can keep my eyes

open. I got it purty well figgered out who done the job."

The word "job" in that connection had a professional sound. So had the word "theory." Andy talked as if he knew what he was about, and inasmuch as Overturf certainly did not, he was willing to be led. He told the constable to go ahead.

Maguffin spent the most of the day prowling about in a mysterious manner. Along toward night he came back to the justice and swore out a warrant for the arrest of Nels Tillong, another Swede.

Because there was no jail at hand where a prisoner could be locked up overnight, the officials chose to wait till morning before taking Tillong into custody. But bright and early Constable Maguffin sallied forth with his nickeled badge prominently displayed and the papers buttoned under it.

He found Tillong and Hanson working together at some kind of carpentry. Tillong was sawing a board when the constable tapped him on the shoulder.

"You're my prisoner!" Andy announced, in the accepted style.

Tillong stopped sawing and stared. "Yah—yah!" he faltered, with sagging jaw. He didn't understand a word.

Andy got out the warrant and unfolded it. "Nels Tillong—grand larceny," he read off, pointing to the words.

Nels shook his head. There was no defiance in the gesture—only bewilderment.

Andy touched his badge significantly, as to intimate the futility of resistance.

Tillong had his coat off and the constable picked it up and helped him into it. Christian Hans, standing by, spoke a few words in Swedish. He didn't understand either, but he seemed at least to get the idea that Tillong was desired to go somewhere, and the upshot was that they both went, the constable leading his prisoner in front and Hanson bringing up the rear.

8

Their destination was Overturf's house; and now, what with the word flying from lip to lip both in English and Swedish, there gathered such a crowd as could by no means squeeze in.

The justice had a table set out and he took his seat behind it. He was ill at ease. At his right hand lay a thick book in paper binding stamped across the front cover with the title "Procedure." It showed signs of having been much consulted.

Constable Maguffin brought his prisoner up to the table. Christian Hans Hanson was lost in the throng that filled the room and overflowed into the yard and that threatened, unless the pressure from the outskirts should be somehow checked, to engulf the whole machinery of the law.

The justice cleared his throat. "Do you wish to hear the complaint read?" he asked, addressing the prisoner.

Tillong's perplexity had begun to be visibly mingled with concern, not to say alarm. Though he should fail of anything like an adequate grasp of the meaning of these proceedings, that very fact might well serve to make them more ominous. Overturf looked severe and so did Andy Maguffin and looks were a universal

language that needed no interpreter. The prisoner swallowed hard.

"Yah—yah!" he answered, uncertainly.

The justice read the complaint aloud. It was brief, its technical terms copied from the forms in the book at Overturf's right hand, and it set forth that Nels Tillong was accused of having wrongfully, feloniously and with criminal intent purloined the sum of $150, more or less, in gold coin, from the pocket of Christian Hans Hanson, "contrary to the statute made and provided and against the peace and dignity of the State of Minnesota."

Justice Overturf was well rehearsed.

"Are you guilty or not guilty?" he inquired.

Tillong could see that something was expected of him.

"Yah, yah!" he replied, eagerly now, as by way of signifying a willingness to do his part.

At least the names mentioned in the complaint were familiar to the listening Swedes, and at the sound of his own, Christian Hans Hanson started forward, pushing his way through the throng, and by the time the reading was finished he had struggled out into the open space in front of the table. There, without waiting to get his breath though it was pretty well spent, he broke into speech, volubly and in a high, shrill key. The Swedes, who greatly outnumbered the Yankees present, were straightway affected with a marked unrest, but whether in response to some appeal in Hanson's words or because of doubts as to the propriety of what he was doing did not appear.

The justice dealt with the irregularity promptly and sternly.

"Silence in the court!" he thundered, with a dark frown.

"Silence in the court!" Constable Androscoggin Maguffin repeated after him, and glared at Hanson.

Silence ensued. Christian Hans hadn't another word to say. But though, by that, the hearing was free to proceed, it did nothing of the sort. It had come to a standstill and it didn't start up. Justice Overturf, frowning at the accused across the table, hadn't a notion what to do next.

9

So intent were the inhabitants of Gumbo on the unusual doings that they forgot about the morning train. It pulled in and pulled out and there was nobody to give it a thought or to observe the man who alighted. A man of thirty or thereabouts, stockily built and with a strong, aggressive jaw—Clay, the agent at the station, got the idea at once that the stranger's business, whatever it might be, wasn't likely to suffer from any lack of assurance on his part.

He asked a question or two and struck out for Overturf's house, half a mile distant but in plain sight. He walked briskly and with nervous energy.

He arrived at a tense moment and people weren't generally aware of his presence until he had shouldered his way through the crowd and confronted the justice just as the justice had come, so to speak, to the end of his tether.

"If the Court please," the stranger began, in the usual form of address.

No fault could be found with his English—it was literally perfect. Nevertheless he spoke with an ac-

cent that betokened him a foreigner. He was panting after his brisk walk and he didn't go on at once with what he had to say; but the court was more than pleased to await his convenience.

In point of fact, it was he who saved the situation. He was none other than the lawyer to whom Christian Hans Hanson, or some other Swede for him, had written about the missing money: Knute Nelson, of Alexandria, a name destined to eminence.

"I am not retained, Your Honor," he presently made known, "but I felt it my duty to come up here and offer my assistance."

Justice Overturf made no concealment of his relief.

"I reckon you can assist us if you know how to talk with these people," he said.

"They are not my people exactly," Nelson confessed. "I am a Norwegian. But the Norwegians and the Swedes are cousins by blood and I can speak with them. If Your Honor will permit, I should like to have an opportunity to make some inquiry among them."

His Honor's answer to that was to announce a recess of half an hour.

Under Constable Maguffin's watchful eye, the lawyer took Hanson and Tillong aside and talked with them. Tillong was seen to shake his head vehemently, while Hanson was so worked up that he could scarcely say a word even in his own language.

Not an onlooker withdrew during the recess, though it lasted well over half an hour. Even those who were hopelessly outside and too far away to see or hear anything of the proceedings—even they stood their ground. Nor, though they were entirely free to con-

verse, was there much conversation—subdued whispers here and there, but for the most part silence. When with a tap of his knuckles on the table Justice Overturf called for order in the court it signified that the recess was at an end, but beyond that it was no more than a formality—the room was already as still as it could be.

Having finished his conference, Nelson stood forward.

"Your Honor," he said, suavely but seriously, "I am persuaded that there has been a mistake here. The wrong which has been done Hans Hanson cannot be righted by doing Nels Tillong another and even greater wrong. It is too bad that an honest man's money should be stolen from him, but it is much worse that an innocent man should be accused. The defendant now before Your Honor is not guilty—I can assure the Court of that. Why he is accused, I do not know—I hope it is not for the purpose of shielding the guilty parties.

"I am not here to point the accusing finger at anybody. I have only to say that Christian Hans Hanson's money was not stolen by a Swede. Shall I be rightly understood when I express the wish that it had been stolen by a Swede? If a Swede had stolen the money it would be just another theft—an everyday affair, as we may say. Since no Swede did it, we have to think of the act in a more deplorable light—as an invasion of the common rights of hospitality, such rights as the veriest savages respect.

"These people are strangers in a strange land. If you choose to be less than cordial with them, if you choose to welcome them among you but coldly, they

perhaps cannot complain—you have a good right to your likes and dislikes. But when you are less than just with them, you offend against the proprieties in a very special sense. Need I warn you that no people can so offend without being the losers by it in the end?

"I am sorry that there should be in your flourishing little town of Gumbo anybody so low and lost to the better instincts of mankind as to steal under any circumstances, doubly sorry that there should be anybody so devoid of the sentiments of neighborly comity as to steal from these Swedes.

"Christian Hans Hanson worked hard and long to amass that little fortune. Wages in Sweden are pitifully small and a part of what he earned had to go, while they lived, to the support of his infirm father and mother. Ten years and more he toiled early and late before he had enough saved to pay his passage over and get him started in the new home.

"He is overwhelmed by what has happened to him. It is like a stunning blow delivered out of the dark. He is broken—unmanned—knowing not which way to turn.

"Is that the kind of welcome you of Gumbo wish to extend to these simple, inoffensive folk? Your Honor, I cannot believe that it is. I believe that on sober second thought you will wish to make amends.

"What I propose, therefore, is that an adjournment be taken until to-morrow. I will remain, to assist as far as I may in untangling the snarl—not as anybody's lawyer, but rather as a plain citizen with no purpose but to serve the common welfare. Between now and to-morrow, I trust, Christian Hanson's money will be

returned to him and there will be no need to proceed further with the trial in hand."

It was returned. When, pursuant to adjournment, court convened the next morning, Constable Maguffin had the money in his keeping. He handed it to Justice Overturf; Justice Overturf handed it to Knute Nelson; and Knute Nelson handed it, the original gold intact, to Christian Hans Hanson.

Hanson was overjoyed, and Tillong likewise, while Nelson, the lawyer, gave expression to his gratification in a little speech, complimenting the justice and the constable and thanking the community at large.

Maguffin didn't say who had handed the money to him, and in that he was thought to have acted properly. In after years, looking back at Andy's various exploits, neighbors might place a different construction on the developments of that day, but for the present it was deemed only right to draw the veil of oblivion over the transaction.

No sin was imputed to the constable unless it should be an excess of zeal in the performance of his duties, and that could be forgiven.

10

While yet the Yankees were not too bitter to be amused they deemed the names of their new neighbors exceedingly funny. So funny that the bare mention of them was enough to start a laugh.

For instance, Peter Olson's son wasn't an Olson—don't think it. He was a Peterson. Ole Peterson's son, on the other hand, wasn't a Peterson. He was an Olson. Peter Olson's son Ole was Ole the son of

Peter, or Peter's son, the family name shifting with the given name. Yankees made no end of sport of that custom.

But not all the names were so easy to pronounce. There were jawbreakers like Skjodalsvold and Sjoblom and Opsjon and these were the funniest. Yankees made no pretense of pronouncing them right, but purposely distorted them, and the more fantastic the distortion, the better the joke.

Lunds, Rands, Bards, Borgs—short enough and plain enough. But if no great sport could be made of them, there were plenty of the other kind.

Dahlbergs, Palmgrens, Brohaughs, Solfests—you might think their names graceful and even distinguished, but no quality could exempt them from the banter of the Yankees.

Holmquists, Lundquists, Grandquists, Odquists—Androscoggin Maguffin was especially amused by these. "More damn Quists," he guffawed, "than you can shake a stick at."

III

"Only a lot of boys and girls?
Only the tiresome spelling, writing, ciphering
classes?
Only a public school?
Ah, more, infinitely more."

III

I

THE first sawed lumber brought to Gumbo went into the elevator; the second consignment built the schoolhouse. Education was the common concern nearest the hearts of the Yankee settlers.

At the election in March, while yet there were scarcely voters enough to fill the offices without doubling up, a tax of two mills was voted to pay the teacher and buy supplies, and the board of directors of the district was given authority to borrow $1,000 to defray the cost of material for the building. There was no outlay for labor—everybody was glad to turn in and help, and if among the early inhabitants no finished mechanics were to be found, most of the men were more or less handy with the ordinary tools.

The schoolhouse was neither large nor otherwise pretentious, but it was expected to answer for a number of years. The desks were homemade and rude, but a little inelegance or even discomfort wasn't going to hurt the children any. If the green lumber opened at the seams and the cracks let in the cold, on the other hand they let in good fresh air as well, and a big cast-iron stove that devoured coal by the barrowful kept the youngsters from actually freezing.

The material was on the ground and the building well under way before the Swedes became an element in the reckoning—too far along to permit of any substantial alteration in the plans. These plans contem-

plated a school of forty children or fewer. Forty were enough for any teacher to handle alone, and Gumbo district wasn't expected to muster so large an attendance for some time to come.

So the Swedes, with their big families, gave rise to a problem. If they chose to send their children, and it was soon known that they meditated nothing less, what was to be done with them?

School began in the early fall of 1881 and the first day's enrolment was sixty boys and girls. Even though seats of a sort should be found for so many, how was the teacher to get about among them to any purpose?

But in a way the Swedes who had caused the difficulty were helping to overcome it, for when they had paid the tax of two mills the effect was to swell the revenues of the district far beyond the sum originally estimated. At worst the board had plenty of money, and when it made known that a salary of $100 a month awaited the teacher who qualified for the Gumbo school, it was pretty nearly swamped with applications for the place. Only the best of the graded schools in the large towns paid so much.

With such a multitude offering their services, the plain farmers of the board found it by no means easy to make a choice. Indeed, they trusted mostly to luck. But luck was with them and the teacher they hired gave them no cause to be sorry. A woman, neither very well educated nor widely experienced in the exacting work, but with a talent for keeping children interested and under control that would be hard to beat.

People still talk of that first school in Gumbo, what a hard nut it was to crack and how cleverly Miss Mal-

lory cracked it. The Opsahls have her picture, showing her in a tight basque and with her hair frizzed in front after the fashion of the period. Her face betokens force of character, yet it is a winsome face, too. She afterwards married the county superintendent of schools and when in the vicissitudes of politics he lost his office they moved away, to Moosejaw or Calgary or somewhere up in that country.

2

Sven Opsahl attended the first school for a few weeks. He was a Swede boy unattached, as you might say. That is, he belonged to none of the families in Gumbo, though he came with the Ingbretsons and the Severt Olsons. He was not yet sixteen, but a hulking big fellow, with a ruddy face much freckled and a shock of yellow hair that needed cutting the worst way.

Neighbors heard, as soon as any sort of communication could be struck up between the two races, that Sven's father, a seafaring man, had been lost with the ship he commanded and that Sven's mother had died of grief soon after. That made the boy out a rather melancholy figure, but he refused to live up to the character. Nobody could be less melancholy, in fact—he was always laughing or singing or whistling. In contrast with his countrymen generally, he was a bold scamp, too, and so far from shrinking, as they did, from contact with the Yankees, he sought them out and ran after them and tried in every way to scrape acquaintance with them. In still another respect he was unlike the majority of the Swedes—the fun poked at him seemed not to hurt his feelings in the least. It might be vanity steeling him, for vanity sometimes has

that effect, but if so it didn't make him any less likable. You had to be pretty strongly prejudiced against his kind not to take a fancy to Sven Opsahl.

He showed up at school the first day wearing his broadest and most disarming grin. He didn't know enough English as yet to inform the teacher that he wished to enroll, but that was what he wished and inasmuch as he brought a new First Reader under his arm Miss Mallory could pretty well guess.

She eyed him rather uncertainly. He was man grown and it was no part of her contract to take men to teach. But of course he might not be as old as he looked, and she ended with giving him the benefit of the doubt.

She seated him with the class in the First Reader and he bulked bigger than ever in that company. But if he was ill at ease there, it wasn't the incongruity of his position that made him so—he couldn't have minded that part less if he had been wholly unconscious of it. To the others, however, it caused disturbance enough. Miss Mallory did her best to check them, but as often as Sven stood up or sat down or spoke, the children couldn't be kept from snickering. Even the Swedes snickered, while as for the Yankees, several of them had to be sent out of the room. Weese Overturf had to be sent out twice, though her behavior was ordinarily exemplary.

From morning till night Sven sat ludicrously cramped up at the little desk, but always in good order and studied his book in perfect serenity or rose unabashed when called on and pronounced the words of the lesson in a loud, confident manner. The way he pronounced the words provoked more snickering than

anything else: he was so confident about it, yet got them so absurdly wrong.

At the first intermission, about 11 o'clock, when the school went whooping out to play, Sven caused a fresh sensation by lighting his pipe and smoking it. Nobody snickered at that, however. If the Swedes weren't particularly affected, the Yankee youngsters were shocked and given scandal. No doubt there were boys among them who smoked, but only furtively, and never at school. Nor was anybody more shocked than Miss Mallory, brought up as she was to consider smoking a vice. She could see that Sven Opsahl had no such notion of it and that he meant no offense, nevertheless she deemed it her duty to put her foot down. She went right out where the big Swede was pacing up and down with his pipe in his mouth and strictly forbade him.

The way she did it was to point to the pipe and shake her head with a look of reprobation that no man, however ignorant of English he might be, could fail to understand.

"No, no—you mustn't do that!" she warned him, vehemently.

He stared at her. Her vehemence sobered him.

"No—not!" she insisted.

He had his pipe out of his mouth and when, recovering a little from his astonishment, he made a motion to put it back she restrained him.

"Not!" he repeated after her. A grin started to take form, but faded out in a look of bewilderment.

"It's bad for the other children to see you smoke here," she protested. "Not here. Bad—bad!"

"Bad—bad!"

But though the ground of her objection eluded him, it was sufficiently clear that she did object, and Sven made no further demur. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe and put it away in his pocket, and he didn't smoke any more at school.

It was only a little while till he fell out, much to Miss Mallory's relief. Though he was not intentionally unruly, his presence upset the regular order. Somehow, too, it made the teacher feel awkward. She surmised that except for his ignorance of English he knew more about the lessons than she knew. Indeed, she couldn't have much doubt of it after the day she wrote up a baffling problem on the blackboard for some of the sharper wits to wrestle with and Sven, watching her, took the crayon from her hand and indicated an algebraic solution that went into water well beyond her depth. It was not necessarily a reflection upon her, because elementary arithmetic was as far as she was expected to go in mathematics; still, Sven's display of learning made her uneasy and she was glad when, entirely of his own motion and without prompting, he quit school.

It was in these days that J. Cardigan Clewel, a wandering adventurer in the journalistic field, landed in Gumbo with some boxes of wornout type and a battered hand-press and launched the first newspaper between Fergus and the river—the Gumbo *Voice*. The press was a mankiller—Clewel couldn't so much as start it without help; there were still other capacities in which a strong and willing youth might be useful, and Sven Opsahl being exactly that kind, he was taken on, to do the heavy work and learn the printer's trade.

Nominally he was paid $5 a week, but no actual

cash entered into the transaction. When payday came round Clewel handed out an order for goods on some merchant who owed him a bill for advertising; Sven turned over the credit so obtained to pay his board; and what with a profit charged against him at both ends of the deal, his wages were small enough. But he was never heard to complain. Nor, indeed, everything considered, had he any reason. The newspaper office, though so crude and ill furnished, was the best of schools for him—what he needed most was to pick up English and nowhere else could he have picked it up so rapidly. He learned to speak the speech of his new country as he set the words up in type and the incidental drudgery was no drawback. He made play of it—briskly and blithely swung the lever of the old hand-press and was so far from being killed that he had plenty of breath left whereby to sing and whistle and cut an occasional playful caper.

Clewel wasn't unkind. He made Sven get his hair cut, and he was a different boy from that day forth, almost as if with his yellow locks he had shed something of his old identity.

3

Nobody in Gumbo except Weese Overturf ever saw Miss Mallory in tears, and Weese only once. It was when the district refused to spend $100 for a general library.

The teacher boarded with the Overturfs. She came home that day and went right to her room and Weese, scenting something very wrong, peeked through the keyhole and, behold, Miss Mallory was crying.

She thought a library just that important. When

she couldn't have the $100 to buy a few books she was afflicted and cast down.

In a way, though, she couldn't blame the district. It was already bonded heavily to build the schoolhouse and taxed heavily to pay the teacher's salary and other necessary expenses—naturally enough, the board and others took the position that there was no money to spare for frills. When Miss Mallory insisted that a library was in no sense a frill, but an essential part of the garment of education, the skeptics heard her respectfully, but they were not persuaded. Two of the three members of the board with whom the decision lay were free to say that until the children had learned what was in their textbooks they would be wasting their time to read such stuff as Miss Mallory had on her list. Trowbridge's stories, for instance, or Elijah Kellogg's, or any stories, when you came to that. Though members of the board meant to let her teach the school in her own way, they had grave doubts about stories being good mental food for little folks.

Weese knew of these negotiations in so far as they were not beyond her comprehension, and she easily guessed why the teacher was crying up there alone in her room. Of course it was too bad—if Miss Mallory was going to take it so much to heart, something ought to be done about it.

Shocked and pained, Weese hastily withdrew her eye from the keyhole, but in that moment a resolution sprang up full-grown in her mind. It was a bold resolution, but it didn't dismay Weese Overturf. Furthermore, she wasn't going to ask anybody's help, not even Miss Mallory's. What Weese had in purpose was to write a letter, and that was no small undertaking: a

real letter, the kind that came and went by mail, she had never yet written. But though she so much needed that somebody show her how, she wasn't going to ask anybody. She was a sensitive soul, with a strong distaste for being caught in a failure, and she didn't forget that her purpose might end that way. No, she would play her hand alone, come what might.

She wasn't altogether uninstructed—she knew, to some extent, how letters were written. Pick Overturf, her father, being a magistrate and leading citizen, received letters from the outside world now and then, and he was so proud of them that he preserved them, tied up in little packets and stowed away in a cupboard. Weese was proud of them, too, so that it gave her a thrill to read them. Nobody told her she might, nevertheless she often read them, in secret, and though she understood them only in part they thrilled her notwithstanding.

There was especially a letter from somebody in Washington, in typescript, addressed to Hon. T. Pickering Overturf. It was short, but extremely impressive, for everything about it spoke, to Weese at least, of quality and good form. She was convinced that if she should pattern her letter after it she couldn't go far wrong.

Here is what she wrote:

GUMBO, MINN.,
Nov. 12, 1881,

HON. JIM HILL,
ST. PAUL, MINN.

Dear Sir:

You have so much money it would be nice for you to give us $100 to buy books for our library in school. There are so many books I want to read.

I think the Swedes would read the books if they had a chance. They need something like that so they will learn to speak English better.

There are a good many Swedes in Gumbo.

I am going to be twelve next month.

Respectfully,

LOUISE OVERTURF.

Weese didn't want to ask anybody for a stamp any more than she wanted to ask for advice, and for a like reason—she was afraid somebody might find out what she was about. To tell the plain, unvarnished truth, she filched a stamp out of the drawer of her father's official table, and though she knew it was stealing, like many another guiltier criminal, she justified the means by the end.

The hardest part was to get the letter into the mail. If she were to post it by day she would almost certainly be seen, and to make a pretext for going so far from home after dark called for uncommon strategy. But chance favored her—Miss Mallory forgot some papers at the schoolhouse and had to go back after supper; Weese went along with her to bear her company, and in that way the letter was safely sneaked into the iron box in front of the village post-office.

It was addressed, in an elaborately feigned hand, to "Hon. Jim Hill, St. Paul, Minn."

4

Weese hardly knew which she dreaded more—that the letter might not be answered or that the answer might be a refusal. In a way it would hurt her worse to be ignored altogether, but on the other hand should there be an answer she didn't know how she could keep

it secret, and if it should be a refusal she knew she should never hear the last of it. More than once, during the next few days, she heartily wished she hadn't been so bold, and when, after nearly a week, an answer came and she saw it in her father's hand, she wanted to sink through the earth.

Safe to say, her father was at a loss and wondering, but he gave her the letter without a word. The envelope was larger than usual and in a general way more important-looking, and besides her name in typescript across the front under the stamp there was a square of print in the corner:

ST. P. M. & M. RWY CO.
Office of the President
St. Paul Minn.

Why shouldn't her father wonder?

Weese was too fluttered to consider what she ought to do—she could only act upon the impulse of the moment, and her impulse was to snatch the letter and run away with it. Her behavior, in short, was not of a sort to clear up the mystery to any great extent, but still her father didn't say anything or if he did it wasn't till she had fled beyond hearing.

Away to the barn she ran, where she was absolutely alone except for the horses munching their hay and paying no attention to her—it was there she tore open the envelope with fingers so nerveless and shaky that she could scarcely make them do her will.

A letter fell out and in a species of trance she unfolded it and read it.

At the head of the sheet the name of the railroad was repeated in larger letters and with the words

spelled out. Under it was the date—Nov. 16. The letter proper was likewise in typescript, except the signature, which was written with a pen.

Miss Louise Overturf,
Gumbo, Minn.

My dear Miss Overturf:

Whether or not I have as much money as you think, at any rate I can spare something for so praiseworthy an object and I enclose herewith my check for $100.

If you read as many good books as $100 will buy you will have made an excellent start toward a liberal education.

I am glad to hear there are Swedes in Gumbo. They are northmen and though the north is not the gentlest of mothers her children are only the more apt, by that, to do her credit. We need the Swedes. They are a strong, sober, sensible people. I hope great numbers of them will come over to help us make our country what it ought to be.

With best wishes,
James J. Hill.

Weese read the letter once and flew back to the house.

"Oh, Daddy, Daddy—see what I got! Jim Hill sends us $100 for our liberry—the school—Miss Mallory!" she panted and almost fell in her hurry to lay the papers before her father.

Pick Overturf fingered the check as if he harbored some doubts as to its reality.

"How come him to send it to you?" he demanded.

"I wrote to him—about the books we wanted!" cried Weese, and that was as much as she could say, she was so weak and spent.

Of course she had nothing to conceal now—having gained her point, the sooner the world knew, the better she would be suited.

The gift was the sensation of more than the proverbial nine days in Gumbo, and Weese held her head pretty high when the *Voice* printed her letter and under it Mr. Hill's letter and under that sundry flattering comments on the spirit she had shown.

5

The library was installed without delay, and by way of dedication Miss Mallory got up an elaborate program of exercises. Everybody was there, and the children, drilled and drilled until they were like little pieces of machinery, went through their paces with much applause. A few of them, older and more forward, presented original essays and declamations of an ambitious character. Weese Overturf had an essay and it was very original. She wasn't so very old, but nobody could be more forward.

She came out and made her bow without a trace of diffidence and in a clear, steady voice, announced the title of her essay—"A House Divided." It was written out and she held the sheets in her hand, but while she read from them she often raised her eyes, in the accepted elocutionary fashion, and let them wander easily and casually about the room. However, though her poise was especially noteworthy and no fault could be found with her manner otherwise, people forgot these details as the substance of the essay unfolded.

"I can just remember my Grandfather Allenby, in Ohio," said Weese, reading from her sheets. "He lived with us there in his old age, but before that, for

many years, his home was in Worcester County, Massachusetts. He was there in 1849, the year of the great famine in Ireland, when so many of the Irish were driven out of their own country by the failure of the potato-crop. Mostly they crossed the ocean to America, and some of them landed near where my grandfather lived, so that he saw a good deal of them.

"I have often heard him tell how much the New England people disliked the foreigners and even feared them.

"I guess those Irish were pretty bad. They lived like savages and, what was worse, they seemed to have no wish to live any other way. They drank a great deal too much liquor, and when they were drunk they got into the most dreadful fights. Nobody had any control over them but their priests. My grandfather in the town where he lived often saw the priest in his long black robe rush in among a crowd of fighting Irishmen and scatter them with his cane, beating them over their heads till they howled for mercy. It looked very strange and very wrong to people like my grandfather, the descendants of the old Puritans who settled Massachusetts in the first place. They thought the religion of the Irish the worst thing about them—it seemed no better than a superstition even though the priests did so much to make them behave.

"Every Irish family had a pig and they kept the pig right in the house with them. They didn't even try to be clean. They never took a bath except accidentally, when they happened to fall in the water.

"My grandfather and others like him were very much disgusted and distressed. They looked upon the

coming of the Irish as a kind of plague, like the plagues you read about in the Bible—sent to punish the nation for its sins. It was hard to believe that these foreigners would ever make good citizens. It was easier to believe that they would be the ruin of the country with their evil ways.

"But they were not. It was wonderful what just a few years did to make those savages over. My grandfather was as much disgusted and distressed as anybody, but when he told the story in his old age he always ended by owning up that he and others of his kind had done the Irish a wrong in the judgment they formed of them. He had gone too much by first appearances. To him the Irish appeared to have no good in them, when in fact they had a great deal of good in them, as time showed.

"To-day nobody denies that the children and grandchildren of those immigrants of 1849 are good citizens. It was mostly prejudice that condemned their forefathers. Faults they had, no doubt, but it wasn't so much their faults that got them disliked as it was the fact that they were different. Their ways were not my grandfather's ways, their notions were not his notions, and for that he was narrow enough to think the less of them. I use his own word—he admitted that he had been too narrow.

"Are we that way in our day—too narrow? Are we making the same mistake with our Swedes that Grandfather Allenby and his neighbors made with their Irish?

"I am afraid we are. The Swedes are different. Their ways are not our ways, and we think our ways

are best. Perhaps they are. But is that any good reason why we should give the Swedes the cold shoulder?

"Is it not only the more reason why we should be very kind with them and so win them to our ways? Shall we not the sooner make them good citizens if we are good citizens ourselves? Have we in our relations with them always been good citizens? Let us ask ourselves that.

"We are like a household here in Gumbo. We didn't ask these foreigners to come and live among us, but they are here and we cannot send them away. Our laws give them the right to come here and stay. They are lawfully members of our household. Why, then, should we wish to be divided against them?"

6

Of course, Miss Mallory knew in advance what was in the essay. Indeed, there were plenty of evidences going to show that she had touched it up—though the sentiments might be original with Weese there were forms of expression too far along even for so forward a youngster. But apart from the teacher, nobody in the assembly was expecting anything like that.

Every other number that day was loudly acclaimed —only Weese was greeted, when she finished, with silence. People were simply too astonished to make a sound by way either of approval or disapproval.

There were Swedes present, but it wasn't likely that they fully understood—their grasp of English was still too limited to enable them to follow so fluent a discourse. Had they gathered the gist of Weese's plea they might or might not have been pleased to be

brought into comparison with the Irish. But however that might be, it was certain that neither party applauded.

The foreigners were growing more and more a thorn in these days, and it was going to take something besides a little girl's apologies to make them look like anything else.

"If she was my gal," Androscoggin Maguffin whispered to Pick Overturf, fiercely, as they passed out after the dedication ceremonies, "she'd git a spankin' for that!"

Pick laughed, to make a joke of it; but Andy wasn't joking. Nobody felt the thorn more keenly than he.

IV

"Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife."

IV

I

WEESE'S essay persuaded nobody, and it made no great stir beyond the moment. But Jim Hill's letter was a horse of another color—Yankees of Gumbo did not soon get done talking about it, and the more they talked, the less they liked it. Almost from the first they were doubting if it was indeed Hill's—they would much sooner take it to be the work of some clerk and the sentiments it contained to be his rather than those of his boss. What more likely than that Mr. Hill, big and important and busy as he was, would leave such trifling affairs to be handled by his subordinates?

"Anyhow, if Jim Hill wrote that letter it goes to show that he don't know much about Swedes," Maguffin asserted. Who relishes being told that the thorn in his flesh is not a thorn?

The letter, be it Hill's or another's, did not go unanswered. The mails weren't burdened further, but in the next week's *Voice* appeared a communication that likewise caused a lot of talk, but talk now of a very different purport.

Nobody knew who wrote it unless J. Cardigan Clewel, and if he knew he wouldn't tell. Some guessed it might be the editor's own handiwork, but that wasn't likely. He was a Yankee, but if he shared in the prejudice of his kind it behooved him to hold his peace. The Swedes were a part of the public for serving which he wished to be paid—though they weren't buying Eng-

lish newspapers as yet, they might be presently, and he couldn't afford to offend them. Indeed, if he had refused to print the thing in the first place he would have been no more than prudently mindful of his own interest, and that he had not only printed it, but written it as well, was too much to believe.

The spirit of the communication, especially in view of what took place afterwards, pointed to Andy Maguffin, but it couldn't be his. He had been taught to write his name, after a fashion, and his command of words in certain directions was copious to the point of opulence, nevertheless so sustained a composition was entirely beyond his capacity.

Miss Mallory could have done the writing, but there was no good ground for suspecting that she had. She, too, was a servant of the whole public and the Swedes helped to pay her wages. Moreover, she was in a manner committed to the sentiments of Weese's essay —while she hadn't openly endorsed it, she had assisted in its preparation and had permitted it to be read.

Though the facts alleged in the communication were unfamiliar, no doubt was cast on their essential truth. They were such allegations as everybody wished to believe and that was enough. It wasn't pretended that the situation described existed in or near Gumbo. Most likely it did not, otherwise somebody would have known about it and so have been able to identify the parties.

Here is the communication:

> To the Voice:
>
> May I ask a little of your space in which to tell why my impressions of the Swedes are not exactly those which Mr. James J. Hill avows?

My nearest neighbor is a Swede. He is a married man with several children, but he left his family in Sweden. I believe he has no intention of bringing them over here.

He has 160 acres in wheat and it is good wheat. I expect it will run twenty bushels of No. 1 hard to the acre and he won't get less than a dollar a bushel for it. If he has fair luck he will clean up anywhere from $2,500 to $3,000 from his crop.

He freely admits that it is more money than he could make in Sweden in a lifetime.

But how does he show his gratitude? Come fall, as soon as he gets his ground plowed for next year, he is going to sell his horses and go back to Sweden to spend the winter. In the spring he will return, buy new horses and make another crop, and another fall will see him once more on his way to Sweden.

I ask him if it is because he is afraid of the cold, and he laughs. Of course he isn't afraid of the cold. He is going back to Sweden because Sweden is still his home. His family is there. His heart is there. He has no feeling for the United States as a place to live—he thinks of it only as a place where it is easy to pick up money. Sweden is as much his country as it ever was—the only country he cares anything about.

My neighbor says money will go farther over there. He can buy more alcohol for a dollar in Sweden than he can buy for ten dollars here, and everybody knows that a Swede can't enjoy life without plenty of alcohol. He wants it in everything—his coffee isn't coffee without it and a drop or two in his drinking water doesn't spoil it for him.

I wonder if Mr. Hill really thinks the foreigner who comes over here with such ideas is doing much to build up the country and make it what it ought to be. If so, I don't agree with him. We can't build

up a country with people who sell here and go to some other country to buy. If we fill up our plains with farmers who sell their wheat in the United States and buy their alcohol in Sweden because they can get it cheaper there, how long is our market for wheat going to remain the good market it is? It looks to me like the workers in the factories where American alcohol is made can't keep on paying the farmer the American price for his wheat unless the farmer is willing to return the favor by paying the American price for his alcohol.

My neighbor is selfish enough to want the best of the bargain at both ends, regardless of his duty to sacrifice something for the common welfare—something that will help build up the country, in Mr. Hill's words.

Personally, I haven't much use for alcohol. I think the average Swede drinks a great deal too much of it for his own good or the good of the community. But I don't quarrel with him on that account—if his intemperance was the worst thing about him I shouldn't have a word to say. I speak of alcohol just to show how he looks at things, how narrow and mean and selfish he is. What is true of alcohol is true of every other commodity, the necessities of life as well as the luxuries—whoever sells has got to buy of those who buy of him or his market will soon be gone.

Has anybody ever heard of a Swede taking out his first papers? It is certain that my neighbor hasn't taken out his, and, what is more, I have every reason to believe that he doesn't intend to take them out. Instead of renouncing allegiance to the King of Sweden he remains what he has always been, the faithful subject of that king.

What if the United States should get into war

with Sweden or Sweden's allies? We should have my neighbor to fight, secretly if not openly.

I know only too well what that means. I was in Minnesota in 1862 when the Sioux Indians started a fire in our rear, while we were busy fighting the South. I don't want to see any more of that sort of thing. The Indians were in their own country, too, and to that extent had some shadow of a right to do what they did. But the Swedes are foreigners in every sense.

Everybody knows that they are not homesteading. Why not? Is it because they can't homestead without renouncing the King of Sweden and declaring their intention to become citizens of the United States?

I wonder.

But they can get land without homesteading—thanks to Jim Hill. He sells land so cheap that it is practically a gift. He can afford to do so because the Government made him a present of the land. He uses the land the Government gave him to defeat the purpose of the Homestead Act, which intends that only citizens or prospective citizens shall share in the public domain.

I am told that Hill is a foreigner himself. Has he taken out his first papers?

It seems to me we have a right to know.

NEXT DOOR TO A SWEDE.

2

Whether or not he had any prior knowledge of the communication, Andy Maguffin made no bones of telling the world that its sentiments were entirely to his liking. Indeed, taking his loudly spoken word for it, nothing could suit him better. He called personally at

the office of the *Voice* and registered his hearty approval. He was very emphatic about it and emphasis, with Andy, meant profanity. "To hell with the damned Swedes!" he vociferated.

He was speaking to Clewel, but Sven Opsahl overheard him. Only a low partition of thin boards fenced off the printshop where Sven worked from the dark little den where Clewel had his desk. Maguffin lashed himself up to something of a fury before he was done and he talked so loud that Sven, even though he hadn't been especially interested, couldn't help but get the full benefit. He had a composing stick in his hand, but he laid it down and when Andy went stamping out the Swede boy wasn't far behind.

A dozen or fifteen farmers were loitering about the elevator, waiting to unload wheat. Maguffin was still boiling over, like a kettle with too hot a fire under it, when he joined the group. "To hell with the Swedes!" he blustered, violently. "If Jim Hill stands up for them, to hell with Jim Hill, I say!"

Several of the farmers were Swedes, but they didn't seem to get the idea. An outburst so elemental in its underlying passion and in its manner so bristling as to be by that alone a defiance—it was enough to admonish them that Andy was a good deal wrought up about something and they regarded him with interest, but inasmuch as the imprecation was delivered in English they failed to take it to themselves. If he was trying to insult them his shot fell short.

But he had no more than got it cleverly hurled when Sven Opsahl came up. He, too, as everything about him went to show, was in no very tranquil frame of

mind. He had come away without his hat and he still had on his printer's-apron, grimy with ink.

He halted right in front of Andy.

"Meester Meekuffin," Sven sputtered, "Ay tank you ban purty beeg damfule!"

Andy recoiled, but out of astonishment rather than dismay. He wasn't thought to be a coward and such a wrath as his might make even a coward bold.

"What's that, now?" he choked, pretty near speechless between incredulity and ferocity.

Sven didn't flinch.

"You har me, Meester Meekuffin—you ban a tam beegfule!"

Swedes, as Gumbo knew them so far, were a meek people. None of them as yet had been known to resent an indignity—if they didn't exactly turn the left cheek when smitten on the right they might about as well, and their spunk wouldn't have been esteemed the less if they had. So that when Sven Opsahl stood up in so doughty a fashion, refusing to be browbeaten, it was a real prodigy. Even Androscoggin Maguffin, a man with the bark on and blinded with rage to boot, was caused to think twice by it.

Not, however, to the extent of being given pause. The affront that had been offered him was by no means to be overlooked, especially with so many standing by.

"Looky here, young feller—have you been measured for your coffin?" he demanded.

Sven didn't say—a taunt so figuratively framed might well be too deep for him, but, whether or no, he stood silent. Silent but unabashed—the fire that shot from his blue eyes testified to a spirit wholly unbowed.

Andy drew a step nearer, glowering black as a thundercloud.

"Get to hell out of here or I'll break every damn bone in your body!" he hissed.

"Yah—Ay tank Ay don' run avay!" Sven retorted, awkwardly but stoutly.

Andy, with a torrent of oaths, lunged as viciously as an enraged bull and about as blindly.

"I'll show you, by hell!" he bellowed.

3

The situation was anomalous. Androscoggin Maguffin was the only sworn officer of the peace in Gumbo, the very arm of the law—who was to uphold the law and the peace in a brawl to which he was a party? For the encounter was a brawl and nothing else. Even though Sven Opsahl should justly be held guilty of disorderly conduct, Andy wasn't lunging at him for that. The constable wasn't acting as constable. No sense of official duty prompted him, only the berserker wrath of a violent man stroked the wrong way of his fur or, if you prefer, his bark. But if he had forgotten that he was the arm of the law, bystanders had not, with the result that none of them felt free to lay hand upon him to restrain him.

Furthermore and apart from any consideration of his official character, Maguffin had given his neighbors pretty well to understand that he was a dangerous customer to stir up. Though they had no testimony to that effect but his own, nevertheless it had been enough to get him regarded as a bad man when he was mad. The story went that he had once brained another lumberjack with the helve of an ax because

the other lumberjack crossed him. That was back in Maine, if anywhere. The particulars of the affair were not known in Gumbo except as Andy related them, and there were some grounds of suspecting him of drawing the long bow. Still, his neighbors regarded him much as he would have them regard him, and in the little group of farmers gathered about, there was a unanimous reluctance to mix in the present affray. None of them lifted a finger to put a stop to it.

So far as weight went, the combatants were well matched—both heavies. In age there was a disparity of twenty years or more, but it gave neither the advantage, for if Andy had seen his best days Sven had not yet come to his. It was a green, unseasoned boy against a man no longer young, but tough as rawhide, and neither disposed to back down.

Andy's tactics, if a fighter so furiously angry could be thought to have any, were of the rough-and-tumble order. What they contemplated was to bowl his adversary over at the first rush or, failing in that, to clinch and upset him—the primitive style of battle, with little or no science about it. Sven, the son of peaceful fathers and wholly untrained for personal conflict—he was primitive in his methods, as well, but he was likewise crafty enough to fetch the constable a tap on the nose as he came on and to dodge so deftly that the constable's clutching fingers missed everything but the inky printer's-apron.

The apron was weak with age and much use and it gave way so readily that Andy almost went down on his knees with the force of his own attack. In fact, it looked very much as if he were about to get the worst of it. His nose gushed blood in a thick stream,

whereas Sven hadn't got so much as a scratch. It was the Swede's chance to fall upon the Yankee and beat him down—with the constable off his balance and brought almost to his knees it ought to be easy. But Sven neglected the opening and stood back a little, awaiting the next rush.

It wasn't delayed. Maguffin scrambled up in a jiffy, his strength unspent though he had lost enough blood to drench him, his fury only the fiercer for his failure to land as he had intended. But he was not too furious to profit by the experience, and he didn't repeat the mistake of banging his face against Sven's fist. The constable was still bent on clinching, but he took his measures more cautiously. In point of agility he was the clumsy boy's master; and his agility, now that he saw fit to back it up with a little discretion, told heavily. Too quickly for the more-or-less stupefied onlookers to see how he did it, he made a shift that gave him a grip with both hands under the Swede's leg, and down they went together, Sven sprawling helpless on his back, pinned under Andy's two hundred weight of brawn.

The outlook for Sven wasn't exactly cheerful. If his downfall didn't mean that he was literally going to have every bone in his body broken, anyway, he was in for a good beating. Men of Androscoggin Maguffin's stamp didn't fight for points. Such a thing as a knock-out, unless by accident, was unknown in their kind of warfare. They got the other fellow down any way they could and, having got him down, they bashed his face till he would wear the marks for months if not the rest of his life—pounded his face to a pulp and hammered his ribs till they cracked, with a kick or two

for good measure before they let him up. Nor was Sven Opsahl in a way to be shown any especial consideration. "You tow-headed son of a hellhound, I'll fix you!" Andy panted, and inasmuch as he was in a position to do as he liked, his proposal would seem to be the last word.

4

But meanwhile the rest of the little town had been finding out and from every direction men came running up. Some of them were Yankees, but more and more, as the crowd grew, the Swedes were in the majority. Further, a spirit possessed them unlike any they had previously shown in Gumbo. Whether because their superiority of numbers gave them a new confidence or because they had reached at last the limit of their endurance like the worm in the proverb, anyhow their accustomed garb of humility was laid aside. Nor was the leader lacking through whom their altered mood should find expression.

Moberg namely.

He had come among them not long since—a free preacher, proclaiming the Gospel after his own fashion, without authority of ordination. Though he had bought land he wasn't too busy with his farming to hold frequent meetings and he soon gathered a congregation about him. But he didn't derive his influence entirely from the pastoral relations so formed. Moberg had the qualities of a tribal chieftain and already the Swedes had learned to look up to him in some such character.

He was among the first to run up now, and he wasn't afraid to take a hand. He and several of his country-

men at his instance straightway laid hold of Andy Maguffin and by main strength and with scant ceremony pulled him off his adversary.

Andy resisted their interference valiantly.

"Keep out—it's a fair fight!" he shouted, and lashed at them with his fists and his feet.

But the peacemakers, so to term Moberg and the Swedes with him, were not to be shaken off. Andy implored the bystanders to see fair play and let the fight go on, and there was no reason to doubt that the Yankees among them would have been very willing to do so—if they had been numerous enough there might have been a race riot, with serious bloodshed and destruction. But they were so obviously too few to face the Swedes in their new mood that Andy was left to his own resources and had to submit.

Sven Opsahl got up looking pretty sheepish. The fight was gone out of him—like a puppy-dog worsted, he had enough. Andy Maguffin, fuming under the restraint that he couldn't break through, assailed the boy with the most frightful epithets he could muster, but they struck no fire—though Sven could hardly help but understand how opprobrious they were, he hadn't a word to say in answer.

But that might be partly because he had another ordeal to face, for now Moberg proceeded to give the boy a rare dressing down, rebuking him in terms which, though spoken in Swedish, sufficiently betrayed their sting to everybody who heard them. Sven was seen to wince under them as he might under the lash of a whip. He didn't try to run away from his scolding, however. Everything went to show that it hurt him deeply, but he stood and took it and only when the

parson finished and turned his back did Sven slink away with his head hanging.

As for the other Swedes, they listened with an awed air, as if Moberg might be some prophet hurling denunciation.

Andy Maguffin was still having to be held. He wanted to fight Moberg. He offered to meet in battle any two Swedes they might select, and when no two stood forth he raised the number to three. He cursed them for a lot of cowards who were afraid to fight fair and he cursed the Yankees who refused to come to his aid. He vowed he would get even with them all though it should be the last thing he ever did.

Of course he couldn't go on like that forever—though he did his best to keep his anger up to the boiling-point, it was bound to cool. His struggles tired him out, especially as they were altogether ineffectual. But it remained for Pick Overturf to lay on the touch that relieved the situation.

Pick was mindful of his official duty. He came forward as a magistrate and he spoke plainly.

"A constable that disturbs the peace," he warned Andy, "is subject to removal—it says so in my book. If the sheriff of the county was to hear about you fightin' an' cussin' an' raisin' Cain like you are, I don't doubt he'd send down here an' have your star took away from you an' give to somebody else. We can't put up with constables that break the law theirselves."

It was enough—Maguffin was proud of his badge and he came down off his high horse in short order.

"He called me a damn fool!" he grumbled, but so subduedly that the Swedes who were holding him let go, at a word from Moberg, and drew back.

"That don't make no difference," Pick Overturf insisted. "If a man disturbs the peace it's your business to arrest him, but it ain't your business to git him down an' gouge his eyes out."

So ended the brawl. But there remained the seeds of other brawls. It wasn't a part of Maguffin's philosophy to forgive and forget, and his was no uncommon philosophy, either. In fact, things were coming to a rather ugly pass. In so far as the peace of the community depended on the refusal of the Swedes to be kicked into a fight, it was at an end—they were not refusing any more, and while their new stand might serve as a warning to some to go slow, Maguffin and his breed weren't apt to see it in any such light. With them it was more in the nature of the red blanket that incenses the bull.

5

Shortly the *Voice* came out with a squib about Jim Hill—an inspired utterance, perhaps.

We learn [it ran], that Mr. Hill, though born in Canada, is a full citizen of the United States, having taken out both his first and second papers.

We have it upon the best authority, moreover, that Mr. Hill is not in favor of admitting foreigners who mean to share only in our prosperity without helping to bear the burdens. But he doubts if there are many such. He believes that with few exceptions the foreigners who are coming to our country sincerely intend to make it their country, as well. He thinks we should bear in mind that it isn't always easy to pull up the roots that have been growing for generations. We can afford to be patient and leave it to time to naturalize these peoples in fact, even though the process should take longer than the law takes to naturalize them in form.

6

In the summer of 1881 an assassin's shot laid President Garfield low, and until the shock wore off, Gumbo's neighborhood animosities were to some extent forgotten.

Pick Overtuff took it especially to heart, and though not ordinarily what would be called an outspoken man, he was at no pains to conceal his feelings now.

The tragedy was attended by circumstances that couldn't help but lead to damaging inferences. The Republicans were in the midst of a bitter family quarrel—the personal quarrel of Blaine and Conkling grown big enough to disrupt the party. Conkling thought, and others thought with him, that he had saved the ticket from defeat the previous year, yet Garfield showed no gratitude after his election. On the contrary he made Blaine his Secretary of State and let it appear that Blaine's wishes were to govern in the councils of the administration. For Conkling there was nothing but slights and snubs. He was Senator from New York. By courtesy and long usage he should have had the naming of the federal officers in his State. Yet when it came to the plum of plums, the post of Collector of Customs at the nation's largest port, Conkling's recommendation was passed over and a man of Blaine's selection was appointed.

That was the culmination—if not a deliberate slap in the face, then something very like it.

The course of events was in some sense a vindication for Conkling. The convention which nominated Garfield hadn't neglected to throw a sop to the defeated Stalwarts, as Conkling and his faction were nicknamed to keep them from being disgruntled,

Chester A. Arthur, a Stalwart, was chosen to be Garfield's running-mate in the race. So that when Garfield, after months of heroic suffering, breathed his last at Elberon-by-the-Sea, Arthur was sworn in as the twenty-first President of the United States.

A vindication, but an indictment as well. When Pick Overturf heard that Garfield had been shot he accused Conkling in so many words. "He wants his man to be President," Pick declaimed, angrily. "If he can't have his way by fair means he'll have it by foul."

Meaning no less than that Conkling was the real assassin—he had as good as fired the shot.

Androscoggin Maguffin was as firmly persuaded to a like effect, but by a little different course of reasoning. If Garfield had been under Blaine's thumb, what of it? Blaine was a Maine man, therefore he could do or cause to be done no wrong. Andy was not only outspoken in his resentment, but violent.

"Mark my words—Arthur'll never be President!" he prophesied, darkly. "Shootin's a game two kin play at. If Garfield dies an' they undertake to put Arthur in his place somethin's goin' to drop. Don't you forget it—somethin's goin' to drop!"

War—that was what Andy had in mind. If Conkling and the Stalwarts got their man into the White House they would have to walk over a number of dead bodies, Androscoggin Maguffin's among them. Did anybody suppose honest men were going to submit to a wrong like that rather than fight?

"Not much, Mary Ann!" Having exhausted his large supply of strong oaths the constable fell back upon a ladylike byword and the very contrast gave it a certain force. "We'll go down there an' we'll see

that old Conkling gits what he deserves. Hangin' ain't none too bad for the likes of him!"

Beyond a doubt these two frontiersmen voiced a sentiment not uncommon throughout the country, but time goes far to soften such acerbities. Garfield was shot in July and he didn't die till September and in that long interval the sober second thought had its effect. Conkling resigned from the Senate and was not sent back—he figured no more in politics except as a memory. Thomas C. Platt, the other Senator and a henchman of Conkling's, likewise resigned, and though he returned to office years afterwards and became a powerful boss, the Stalwarts, as such, were done.

While Arthur was President he went West to assist in the ceremony of driving the golden spike that finished the Northern Pacific railroad. He was accompanied by General Grant, Henry Villard and a large party of lesser celebrities, and Pick Overturf made a special trip to St. Paul to see them. He shook hands with the man whom he had so roundly condemned as Conkling's tool and came home full of his praises.

"He's a thoroughbred!" Pick declared.

V

"Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous: but who is able to stand before envy?"

V

I

THE Swedes waxed prosperous and their prosperity didn't get them any better liked. If it wasn't a count against them, anyhow it gave gravity to the other counts.

They were a frugal race. They had been schooled by a niggardly nature and they couldn't forget their lesson right away though they had now to deal with a nature much more generous. Generation after generation of scanty crops had trained them to the kind of farming which lets nothing go to waste, which regards no expenditure of labor too great so long as it serves in any degree to eke out the fruits of the earth. In the old country their women and children had always gleaned the fields after the reapers who reaped with sickles, and if they didn't glean in the new country where the reapers were mechanical contrivances by means of which a team of horses did the work of twenty men—if the women and children didn't glean after these, they found other work to do that was hardly more worth while in the estimation of the Yankees. The Swedes actually did winnow the mountains of chaff which the big threshers left under their blowers. Yankees laughed at such small methods, but every bushel of wheat the foreigners reclaimed meant a dollar more, and they weren't used to thinking of the labor as costing anything.

They were taught to be saving and they were taught to be thorough. It wasn't only the women and children who toiled for small return. The men were equally unafraid of work. They were in the fields before the sun, and nightfall found them still there—as long as there was light to see, they bent to their task. They plowed deep, every inch of the soil—Yankees might think it enough to "cut and cover," but not the Swedes. They harrowed their plantations over and over, up and down and back and forth. They knew by instinct if not by dint of scientific experiment that cultivation conserves moisture and so they kept their harrows going even after the wheat was up and growing thick. Their fields were too wet in the spring and too dry in the summer, but their tireless industry devised ways of making one drawback compensate the other, at least to some extent. Perhaps a whole bushel of wheat wouldn't have paid hired help to do the work by which they recovered a peck, but the peck was pay enough for them.

They were sparing of expensive tools—their hands had always served, they would make them serve still. Dealers in farming machinery were among the first merchants to set up shop in Gumbo and they displayed a tempting variety of gaily painted implements, their purpose to save labor. Many of these were sold, too. But not to the Swedes. The kind of thrift that saved labor by spending money was new to them and they didn't take to it at once—they chose rather to stay in the old way of saving money by the lavish expenditure of labor. A wheeled plow, with nothing for the man to do but shift a lever at the turns—it could be had for $50; but a walking plow cost only $10 and if the

man took the needful pains it broke the ground about as well. The Swedes looked at the $50 plows and no doubt thought them very pretty, but it was the $10 plows which they bought.

They lived cheaply—meanly, if you please. Right behind the dealers in flashy implements came dealers in luxuries of every sort. Things to eat, especially. Exotic fruits in cans—nothing could taste better after the fare which the exigencies of frontier life restricted to the plainest necessities. But the foreign population did not indulge—for them the plain necessities were still enough. The first winter some adventurer looking to the future for his profits filled a big, loosely boarded crib with ice from a not too distant lake and that meant fresh meat throughout the year for such as were willing to pay the price; but the Swedes ate their pickled pork and beef and called it good.

If they were in any respect luxurious it was when they gratified their liking for alcohol, and even then they didn't forget to be frugal. They bought the spirits raw and diluted them down until the cost was but a trifle in comparison with what the saloons charged for an equal measure of stimulant in the form of beer, wine or whisky.

A saloon was something the Swedes had no manner of use for. Indeed, the dramshop was their very particular aversion. The cleanest and most orderly place of the kind in Gumbo—the only place where the glasses were scoured dry after being used and not merely dipped in water and left to drain dry—was kept by a Swede, Nick Jorgens, and for that his people looked upon him as a renegade. Though apart from his business, which then had the sanction of the law

and a large measure of public approval, they couldn't say a thing against Nick; nevertheless they avoided him and would rather not have any dealings with him.

Almost there was something fanatical in the intense hostility of the Swedes in general toward the licensed traffic in drink. Once Moberg was called away to Mankato to assist in a revival meeting and while there he saw something of the crusaders, the bands of women who in those days contended against the growing evil of intemperance by kneeling in the dust in front of saloons and offering up their prayers. The sight set Moberg on fire with holy zeal, and no sooner was he back in Gumbo than he formed a band of women to kneel and pray in front of the saloons there. Tradition has it that Nick Jorgens was the only rumseller who treated the crusaders with any sort of respect; but that didn't make him any less a renegade.

2

Pick Overturf's quarter-section of land yielded him just a little short of three thousand bushels of top wheat that first year, and when he cashed the check he held in his hand more money than had ever been his, at one time, in his life before.

There were debts to pay, however. He owed the bank several hundred dollars—mostly promissory notes given to pay for brightly painted machinery. Bills had been run up with the merchants, as well—a little here and a little there, for exotic fruits and other luxuries, until the sum total was no trifle. Yet when every debt was paid and he stood square with the world he still had about fifteen hundred dollars.

"That," he announced to whom it most concerned,

"goes into a house. I'm tired of livin' in the ground like a woodchuck!"

The family were delighted. Weese proposed at once that they have a big party as soon as the house should be finished.

"I don't doubt fifteen hundred dollars had ought to put us up a right good little shack," commented Mrs. Overturf.

Pick laughed at her.

"Fifteen hundred," he boasted expansively, "won't much more'n lay the foundation of the house I got in mind. We got the credit—why not have some good of it?"

That meant going in debt, but the woman had nothing to say against it—if she harbored any misgivings she didn't voice them. Pick's purpose was to borrow, and if he borrowed he would have to mortgage, and he couldn't mortgage without his wife's consent, but it was never her way to oppose her will to his. When he brought her the papers to sign she signed, without reading them.

He borrowed $1,000, but in making his plans for the new house he didn't limit the cost to $2,500, the result being that his money was gone before the building had been much more than roofed in. He finished off three rooms after a fashion, and there the family lived in quarters not much more commodious than the sod house had afforded. Upstairs the rafters were bare and the floor, for the most part, was only rough boards laid down loose. The big front room downstairs had a better floor and it could be used for such occasions as the trial of Nels Tillong, but the family got little or no good out of it.

Outside, the house remained unpainted and the weather soon gave it a shabby aspect in spite of its commanding proportions.

The mortgage meant that there was $10 every month to be dug up by way of interest. Not a serious burden so long as the land gave back its three thousand bushels of good wheat each year, but a burden still to be borne though the crop should fail.

Weese still talked of having her big party, notwithstanding the unsatisfactory condition of the house, but Pick had begun to feel the pinch of his unsound financing and he thought the expense more than they could rightly afford.

3

Lars Ingbretson likewise owned a quarter section of land, but a corner of it was wiregrass bog and his first crop of wheat brought him only about $2,500, gross. More than $2,000 of it, however, was clear gain. He had bills to pay, but they were modest bills—for necessaries in the way of food and the cheapest tools that could be made to answer.

By the next year Lars and his wife and boys and girls had drained their bog land and being drained it produced more abundantly than the rest of the farm—after harvest the shocks stood so thick down there that a team and wagon could scarcely get about among them. Lars hauled thirty-five hundred bushels of wheat to market altogether, and between $2,000 and $3,000 went into the bank to swell the $2,000 that had been lying there since the previous year.

The first week in August the Ingbretsons dug the cellar for a new house and the day before Christmas they had their warming party. Their house wasn't as

commanding in its proportions as Pick Overturf's mansion, but it was plenty big enough and it was finished throughout—painted and plastered and papered. Moreover, it lacked that adornment almost universal among the Yankees—a mortgage. It had cost in the neighborhood of $4,000 and Lars paid every bill as it fell due.

The warming party at Ingbretson's was the biggest thing of its kind in Gumbo's history so far, though it wasn't as big as it might have been, at that. Not only were the Swedes bidden, but the Yankees as well, and they had no reason to doubt that they would be made heartily welcome, nevertheless they did not grace the occasion with their presence. The two races weren't mingling socially and inasmuch as Lars Ingbretson's new house in a manner put the Yankees to shame, there was a particular reason why they should hold aloof.

Part of the festivities, the very backbone of them indeed, was a wedding, between Alma, the oldest of the Ingbretson girls, and Halvor Halvorson, the son of a near-by family, and in that connection censorious onlookers were given especial scandal by the parade of foreign customs. Two weeks or so before the appointed day young men rode out on horseback to extend the invitations far and wide, leaving the word at every house without discrimination. If it chanced to be the house of a Yankee there was no more to it—the young man left the word and went his way without dismounting. But if it was a house where Swedes lived he was required to get down and partake of refreshments and when he departed some girl of the household pinned a gay ribbon to the breast of his coat. If the ribbons that fluttered back over his shoulder

were many at length, it meant that the refreshment of which he had partaken was no trifle and always, with these people, nobody was properly refreshed without recourse to the cup that cheers. Young men had been known to wind up their rounds almost too far gone to sit their horses.

That wasn't the least of the scandal. Yankees deemed it a sorry exhibition of inconsistency when these Swedes distinguished between the liquors served over the bar of a saloon and the stuff they made by mixing raw alcohol with various beverages. Even Moberg, though so rabid in his hatred of the dram-shop, was known to like his dram, and that looked to the Yankees like the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy—Androscoggin Maguffin more than anybody else. The inconsistency and hypocrisy of the Swedes were things he couldn't speak of with patience.

"That there weddin'," he prophesied, "is goin' to be a big drunk, now you see. They think it's a sin to drink in a saloon where you don't never see nobody but menfolks and still they think it's right an' proper to drink an' git drunk in a party where there's women an' children."

Andy drew a disparaging comparison between Moberg and Brother Daniels, of blessed memory. "Me an' Brother Daniels," the constable recalled, "we had our spats. We didn't always see alike. But I think of him as a worthy man an' fitten to expound the word of God. What would he think of a preacher that fights the saloons and sicks his women on to pray agin 'em, an' still drinks hisself an' gits drunk?"

Andy talked freely, as ever, and so bitterly that his words were remembered against him. Nobody was so

out of temper as he, and it was a circumstance not without its significance that nobody was so unprosperous in contrast with the thriving Swedes. He never had any house but the sod hovel, and when he sold his crop there was no more than enough to pay what he owed. The Widow Larkin, too—whose lot he was expected eventually to share—had got on but little better. Her house was built of boards, but it was the veriest shanty, and her farm was so heavily encumbered that the equity, should it come to a foreclosure, would be pretty well blotted out.

4

The day before Christmas was cold and blustery—zero with a rough, damp wind blowing out of the southeast. Earlier in the week there had been two exceptionally sharp mornings—the first, twenty degrees below zero with a blizzard howling down over the plains; the second, thirty below, but as still and bright as only a winter morning in that latitude can be. To-day another disturbance impended and the inhabitants of Gumbo were making the best of that most comfortless of winter's bag of tricks—the north end of a south wind.

But the Swedes weren't letting the weather interfere with their program. It looked like more snow not far off and the roads might be drifted waist-deep by another morning, but never a guest was kept away from the feast at Ingbretson's by the cold or the threatening skies. A few, near neighbors, came on foot; and a few others, young blades, for the most part, on horseback; but families generally bunched together till they had a load for a bobsled and made the

trip that way, their shouts and laughter testifying to their determination to be glad regardless of the drawbacks. From noon till past two o'clock there were bobsleds continually unloading at the door—women and children tumbling out of their quilts and blankets and trooping into the house while the men took the horses to the stables.

The Swedes were very musical, in their rude, untaught fashion. No sooner were several of them gathered together than somebody was ready to start a song, and once it was started everybody joined. The women had sweet, birdlike voices and the men contributed a rich, melodious bass that made very pleasing harmony. Their songs were hymns and ballads of the homely sort, with now and then a comic ditty, sometimes pretty coarse, but always provocative of merriment far out of proportion to the merit of its humor.

The sledloads sang lustily to-day, the voices muffled by the abundant wraps, but none the less joyous for that. Nor was there any pause in the music after the guests had assembled in the house, though it seemed as if everybody was talking too, and between the talking and the singing the uproar they made was prodigious, even for so large a company.

They had fiddlers among them and every Swede knew how to dance—the rustic steps traditional for centuries were a part of the education of the boys and girls. Long before the early nightfall the strings were tuned and the bows touched up with resin, the largest of the rooms was cleared and there young and old cut their capers and ceased not till they were spent and breathless. The air grew hot and stifling.

Though the floor was fresh and new, clouds of dust came up from somewhere under the beating of so many feet. But a confusion of hilarious outcries almost drowned the shrill squealing of the fiddles and everywhere joy reigned unconfined.

Eating was an informality, though not for that reason slighted. In the kitchen, tables were heaped high with everything esteemed good to eat, and guests were free to come and help themselves without ceremony, as the fancy took them.

Drinking, too,—always drinking. Coffee was the favorite beverage and great cauldrons of it were kept constantly over the fire. That is, coffee generously fortified—into every cup of it went a dash of the everlasting alcohol.

There were other drinks, among them a Yankee concoction—a tart and tasty mixture of water and lemons and sugar. Everybody tried it and some liked it, especially with an infusion of alcohol to make it snappy.

At six o'clock the glad tumult was hushed while the bridal party took their places under a bower of evergreens. Alma and Halvor stood hand in hand with their attendants grouped about and repeated the vows as Moberg pronounced them.

Not, however, till the preacher had prolonged the solemnities with words of counsel so far from few that the company were made uneasy. He was in a very mellow mood, with plenty to show that while the spirit of pastoral benevolence proper to the hour no doubt had something to do with it, spirit of another texture had more. His face was unduly red and his drooping, drowsy eyelids betokened nothing so much

as incipient inebriation. His harangue, too, was disjointed and in spots pretty much devoid of sense. Nobody seemed to be particularly shocked by these signs and portents, yet it was a safe guess that every heart was wishing the shepherd of the flock would have done with his inordinate discoursing.

But always there has to be an end, and though it should be with manifest reluctance Moberg wound up at length, mumbling an incoherent prayer while the bridal party knelt and the rest of the company bowed their heads. The benediction was no sooner spoken than Halvor sprang up and gave his blooming young wife a big hug and a kiss. Instantly the house was once more in an uproar. Guests crowded about, laughing and shouting their congratulations. Few tears were shed at that wedding. The only guest who wept was a very young infant who took that way of protesting because he had been forgotten in the turmoil, and his tears hardly counted. Moberg likewise gave Alma a hug and a kiss, but that was no more than the holy man's right and no objection was made, though he prolonged the embrace in a maudlin manner.

5

A number of others were as far flown or farther, and Andy Maguffin's prophecy was in a fair way of coming to pass, what with cups being filled to pledge the newlyweds and the night still young. The cups were uplifted and Moberg was clinging to a chair for support as he proposed a toast, when with a deafening crash the front wall of the house buckled inward and a shower of broken glass rattled over the floor.

Guests were astonished, and in the next instant af-

frighted. Women shrieked and men recoiled. A rush of icy air spread the pungent fumes of gunpowder and the cry went up that they were being fired on. Somebody thought of Indians, though the last Indian had vanished from those regions a generation since—stories of the wanton havoc wrought by savages had penetrated even to far-away Sweden and the fear of what the Indians might do was in the hearts of these immigrants. Women clutched up their little children and fled, some to the kitchen and some to the stables and straw-stacks while nothing but shame kept the men from taking to their heels in a like manner.

Not every man there was a coward in his heart, though. Moberg, at least, was not afraid—in that respect if no other he acted the part of a good pastor. The crash sobered him and, being sobered, he faced the situation with cool courage. The front door of the house was wrenched clean out of its frame and while yet the fumes of gunpowder hung thick the preacher fared forth to see what had happened.

His temerity started the women to shrieking afresh. They implored him to come back—he would be butchered and scalped if he didn't. But he paid no attention to their entreaties, and right away a dozen of the men, once more because they were ashamed to do less, rushed out after him.

They found the porch a wreck. Evidently a blast had been set off under it and the force of the explosion had reduced it to kindling-wood. The house proper, except for the broken windows and the door wrenched from its hinges, wasn't much damaged—the front wall had buckled but it had sprung back to its proper place.

There was no believing that the blast had been an

accident. Somebody had laid the heavy charge of powder and set it off deliberately and with malice aforethought.

Under Moberg's direction lanterns were brought and the premises narrowly searched. Snow had been falling in frequent flurries since sundown, but it lay mostly in drifts and near the house the wind had swept the ground bare. Bare and frozen as hard as a rock—not a chance of finding any tracks there. The drifts were trampled where somebody had wallowed through, but the powdery snow had taken no footprints that could be identified.

It was a circumstance not without significance that Ingbretson's porch had been the only porch in Gumbo. Pick Overturf meant to have a porch, but he ran out of funds before he could get it built. The only porch—and a Swede's.

Furthermore, it was beyond denial a sightly touch. It gave the house something of the grand air.

6

Here was an outrageous violation of the common rights, yet nothing was done about it. That is to say, nobody was punished.

Gumbo County was a spacious territory and sparsely settled. The county seat was forty miles away, in Delray—the sheriff's office was there and the sheriff, John Highfil, had never set foot in Gumbo town till he came up to see about the affair of Ingbretson's porch.

Highfil was a Yankee and not given to taking the Swedes very seriously. Few, if any of them, were voters; it was the general belief that they didn't intend to become voters, and in that position of affairs a

placeman who owed his place to popular election had no reason to fear their displeasure.

The sheriff ran up to Gumbo and looked the ground over. Anybody could see that he was not sympathetic. Moberg did his best to get something started. He believed he knew who was at the bottom of the outrage and he hadn't formed his belief without grounds. But his proofs failed to impress Highfil—he deemed them insufficient to justify him in taking steps of his own motion. The best he could, or at least would, promise was that the Grand Jury should hear of the business and Moberg might tell his story to them if they cared to listen to it.

Before he left Gumbo that day Highfil was seen in earnest conference with Pick Overturf and Andy Maguffin. But of course there was nothing necessarily improper about that. Overturf was the local magistrate, while Andy, as constable, might be considered the sheriff's official representative.

The Grand Jury was made up of citizens selected and summoned by the sheriff. They were paid each $3 for every day or fraction of a day they served, together with an allowance for mileage which, in that country of magnificent distances, amounted to a tidy sum. Easy money, in other words—the sheriff was accustomed to select and summon citizens who could be politically useful to him; and what he had been accustomed to do he did now.

The Grand Jury investigated the outrage. Moberg went up to Delray and testified behind locked doors. No other Swede was called, however, and the jury adjourned without finding any indictment.

Moberg was perfecting his English right along,

these days—faster, perhaps, than any of the foreigners unless it should be Sven Opsahl, whose opportunities were exceptional. Though not as highly educated as some clergymen, Moberg had been to school in the old country, he had an elementary acquaintance with the classics, and rather more than an elementary acquaintance with French, and both of these sources helped him now.

So that what he had to say about the outrage and the failure of the authorities to act wasn't said in Swedish altogether or to Swedes only—there was enough of it, besides, to come to Andy Maguffin's ears and to put him in a very bad temper. The old affront still rankled—he bore the parson no love on that score and when next they met and Moberg in the usual way gave greeting, politely enough though without much cordiality, Andy gave him back a vile oath.

"Look here, Moberg," he snarled, "you're talkin' too much with your mouth!"

That he wished to be insulting was perfectly manifest, but Moberg refused to take offense.

"Well, what else should I talk with?" he demanded, jocosely.

Andy swelled menacingly.

"Don't git funny, now. You know damned well what I mean. Take my advice an' keep that mouth of yours shut!"

"But if I keep my mouth shut how should I eat?" Moberg objected, still with the show of levity.

Andy raised his clenched fist—a very threatening gesture indeed.

"Play your cards!" he shouted violently. "If you got any cards, lay 'em on the table. I won't have you

sneakin' around behind my back like a damned snake in the grass!"

A crowd gathered swiftly—not only casual bystanders, but others as the report spread, more and more of them till a good many were at hand. Both Swedes and Yankees and now their numbers, perhaps because the farming element wasn't so largely represented, were more nearly equal.

Andy Maguffin spat on his hands—another threatening gesture.

"Stand up an' fight like a man!" he bristled.

"No, sir," Moberg replied, gently. "I am a man of peace."

"You mean you're a coward!"

"I mean I will not fight with you."

For a moment it looked as if Andy was going to strike anyhow, but he didn't. They were very near together, looking each other straight in the eye, and Moberg didn't quail. But after a moment, without a word further, he turned and walked away.

"You're a damned coward!" Andy called after him.

If he believed that, few witnesses of the scene agreed with him. Very plainly, though he chose not to fight, Moberg was no coward.

7

Knute Nelson of Alexandria was seen in Gumbo at least once that spring. He talked with anybody and everybody he chanced to meet, but his business seemed to be with the Swedes. It didn't appear that they had sent for him, nevertheless it was they rather than the Yankees that he had come to see.

He was at Moberg's overnight and the lights burned late in the preacher's house.

Pretty soon the Swedes were taking out their first papers. Only a few of them at first, as if they were cautiously trying the ice, but as the season advanced, in increasing numbers, until by early summer the clerk of the district court was swamped with the business. There wasn't so much to it in those free and easy days and Swedes in shoals held up their hands and took the oath that gave them the civil rights of citizens and particularly the right to vote.

Moberg was very active in the work, and because he knew English well enough to interpret between his countrymen and the officials, his services were in brisk demand. Whenever a batch of Swedes took the oath the parson was likely to be there to see the thing through.

That it was a concerted movement everything went to show. That it had some purpose back of it was equally to be taken for granted. Naturally the politicians and placemen pricked up their ears.

Sheriff Highfil with the rest. He was finishing his first term in the highly lucrative office and he wished to serve another—that is to say, the new element in the politics of Gumbo County concerned him very especially and the signs were not altogether auspicious. Nobody knew better than Sheriff Highfil that the Swedes had no reason to regard him with favor. His part in the Ingbretson affair wasn't going to be forgotten in a hurry. Indeed, it was likely that the whole blame for the failure of the Grand Jury to indict would be visited upon him. In a very real sense, since he selected its members, it was his Grand Jury. Though

the Swedes, not having been citizens at the time, couldn't complain because he hadn't selected any of them, nevertheless they could charge him with having so administered the duties of his office as to defeat the ends of justice.

In short, to employ the words of the day, the effect of the new turn was to put the sheriff's fences in bad order.

As was apt to happen in a new community that far north, the political complexion of the county was strongly Republican. The Democrats were still paying the penalty of having guessed wrong so often during the Civil War and they had no strength except in the big cities of the East. There was hardly a Democrat to be found in the Red River Valley so long ago. The Republican ticket never failed to win and the only contest was the scramble for that party's nominations.

So that if the Swedes should be enlisted under the Republican banner the problem would be much simplified for Highfil and others like him. The nominations, in the haphazard system or lack of system then prevailing, could be, as they had been, obtained by trickery pretty much regardless of the preferences of the rank and file, and once they were obtained party fealty could be counted on to hold the rank and file in line.

The Swedes brought with them no predilections that would tend to attach them to one party rather than the other. The nominal issues of tariff and free trade, the talking points of the spellbinders—these meant nothing to the foreigners. In other words, they were not unwilling to be Republicans and inasmuch as there were no Democrats at hand to persuade them other-

wise, they became Republicans by default, so to speak. Knute Nelson was of that faith and nobody had so much influence with the Swedes at the moment. Highfil made a special journey down to Alexandria to point out that now was the accepted time to make faithful Republicans of the new voters.

To what extent Nelson actually mixed in Gumbo County politics that year was known to but few, and those few never told. That he had advised the Swedes generally to take out their first papers was pretty certain, and he may well have recommended them, in a quiet way, to align with the Republican party. But further his hand did not appear.

The Gumbo *Voice* espoused Highfil's cause for reasons best known to J. Cardigan Clewel, but not hard to guess. The sheriff and his backers had money to spend, and spent it, and money was an argument to which Clewel couldn't be accused of turning a deaf ear.

Somebody, perhaps in a spirit of mischief, wrote to the *Voice* to ask if Jim Hill wasn't a Democrat. If he was, his influence might go far to spoil the well-laid plans of those who were bent on making Republicans of the Swedes. The *Voice* printed the letter and answered it by saying that while Mr. Hill was understood to be a Democrat in so far as he belonged to any party, it was fair to presume that if he were a farmer in Gumbo County his good sense and sagacity would make him a Republican. His political affiliations were not likely to be a major concern in the life of a man engaged in such vast enterprises, and Mr. Hill would be the last, the *Voice* was convinced, to wish his beliefs to be accepted simply because they were his.

8

They didn't call them primaries fifty years ago. They were caucuses then and already the word had begun to have an invidious significance, for the reason that while the caucus professed to be a means whereby the voters of a party might register their choice among several candidates, the machinery could be so tampered with as to have an entirely different effect. Highfil had his henchmen in every precinct, and they handled the caucuses in their candidate's interest with no difficulty beyond what was ordinarily encountered and that was very little. The Swedes attended, but they were dazed and diffident—everything was new to them and they were content to do as their neighbors did who were better informed. Another circumstance in no small degree helpful—they were being treated with a consideration such as they were wholly unprepared for. No fun was being made of them any more, either openly or covertly, and the deference shown them was by its very novelty bewildering, to say nothing of its tendency to disarm whatever of distrust they might have harbored. The voting, as always in the caucuses, was by acclamation, the very important post of chairman was assigned to somebody not afraid to strain a point should the necessity arise, and the program previously cut and dried went through without a hitch. Each precinct elected two delegates to the county convention and without exception they were Highfil men.

After that the county convention was the merest form. The delegates assembled and went through the motions and Highfil was nominated, without dissent,

as the regular Republican candidate for the office of sheriff.

By the tokens the nomination was equivalent to an election. There weren't Democrats enough in any precinct to hold a caucus. If the few in the county who were of that household had been given any reason to believe that the Swedes might be enticed away from the Republican fold, very likely another ticket would have been put in the field, but for the present there was no such reason. The strategists of the two old parties had yet to learn the trick of juggling with the prejudices of a foreign population that afterwards played so large a part in Minnesota politics.

The campaign, between the nomination in August and the election in November, was exceedingly quiet in so far as it concerned the candidacy of Sheriff Highfil. What need had he to burn expensive red fire by way of working up a sentiment in his behalf? If he had spent some money previous to the convention, he was at no expense thereafter beyond such general assessments as he might be called upon to pay into the war-chest of his party. Figuratively speaking, he was in what had every seeming of still water and he rested on his oars.

It was not until just the day before election that the waters showed any signs of a disturbance under the surface. Sven Opsahl took the train to Fergus Falls that morning and came back in the evening as far as Delray, bringing with him a bundle which somebody got a chance to feel of on the sly and so to discover that it contained paper sliced up into thin slips, for what purpose could be only too readily guessed.

Sven delivered his bundle in Delray, and Highfil got

word of it that night. He didn't sleep a wink. Indeed, he never went to bed, but mounted, as it were, in hot haste to go forth and warn his henchmen of the calamity that impended.

But it was too late. The polls hadn't been open an hour, election day, until the sheriff's worst forebodings were confirmed. The Swedes were voting the Republican ticket with perfect loyalty except that they were pasting over the name of John Highfil a sticker by which the ballot was made to read, at that point:

For Sheriff, GUSTAF MOBERG

Moberg was elected by a majority which, though not large, was amply sufficient. It wasn't doubted that every Swede in the county had voted for him.

9

The next Grand Jury was not made up of Swedes entirely, but citizens of that nationality predominated in its counsels and the very first indictment reported to the court charged Androscoggin Maguffin with having maliciously and feloniously laid and set off the charge of powder which wrecked Ingbretson's porch and endangered the lives of his guests. A warrant for Andy's arrest was issued at once and Sheriff Moberg went in person to serve it.

News didn't travel so fast in the eighties of the last century, and Gumbo's first intimation was when the two men met right in front of the post-office, at an hour of the day when bystanders were most numerous. In fact, Moberg had come up from the county seat by the train which brought the day's mail and about everybody was there waiting for the postmaster to

hand it out—not only townfolks, but farmers as well, for the rural free delivery was still twenty years in the future.

Andy was going to pass by without speaking, but Moberg detained him.

"Mr. Maguffin," he said, "I have business with you, if you please."

Moberg, by the way, had come to that point in his mastery of English where his foreign origins were betrayed by nothing so much as his precision. Nobody to the manner born would have spoken, anyway at such a juncture, so without a flaw.

Andy halted abruptly. He may or may not have had a premonition—at any rate, he evinced nothing but animosity.

"Well, then, spit it out!" he barked.

Moberg, on his part, preserved a proper official balance between brevity and suavity.

"I have a warrant for your arrest—from the district court, Mr. Maguffin—shall I read it to you?" He drew the paper from his pocket.

Andy went livid. "No damned Swede—" He choked with passion and could say no more.

Moberg unfolded the warrant. "I will read," he said.

Still with the utmost precision. It wasn't a long document, however, and though he pronounced the words deliberately, he was soon done.

Andy was boiling. If he couldn't say what he wanted to say in so many words, nevertheless he made his sentiments altogether clear.

Moberg folded up the warrant, put it back into his pocket and slowly buttoned his coat over it. "Will

you go with me quietly, Mr. Maguffin," he asked, "or shall you compel me to handcuff you?"

Bystanders, more than a hundred of them, crowded up, Pick Overturf among the rest. Pick, partly as a magistrate, but more as a good neighbor, offered counsel of discretion. "Better go along quiet, Andy—you don't gain nothin' by resistin' the sheriff. He's got the papers. He's got the authority."

"Sheriff an' be damned to him!" frothed Maguffin. "To hell with the Swedes! I'll fight any ten of them. I'll—"

"He's got the legal right to call on any of us here to help him," urged Pick. "He's an officer of the law in the pufformance of his duty and if he meets with resistance he's got the legal right to call on anybody he sees to help him. If he calls on us we'll have to help him—under the law."

"I shall not call on anybody to help me," said Moberg.

He had the handcuffs out where they could be seen. They glittered in the sunlight and Andy regarded them balefully. He lifted his eyes and encountered Moberg's. For a tense moment they faced so.

It was Androscoggin Maguffin, the bad man, who backed down at length—with the worst grace in the world, but so far as to relieve the situation. He wasn't cowed. The hatred that flamed in his eyes was untouched with fear. His feelings were what they had been, only that an instinct of prudence had somehow edged in among them.

"He'll go," said Overturf to the sheriff, in a low voice.

Moberg and his prisoner took the train back to

Delray and the prisoner was not shackled. Neighbors went along with him to give bail and he was restrained of his liberty only a few hours.

10

With a flourish of righteous indignation he demanded a speedy trial and it was accorded him. He had to wait less than a fortnight for his day in court.

He was defended by Bill Erwin, of St. Paul, the most famous criminal lawyer between Chicago and the Rocky Mountains. If it was something of a mystery how so poor a man as Maguffin could employ such expensive counsel, perhaps the likeliest answer was underground politics. With the building up of the country men with the bark on were bound to go out of fashion, but they still had their uses in that part of Minnesota. Certain interests with purposes already well formed, but not yet ready to come out into the open, might well be sorry to see Andy sent to the penitentiary for a long term of years—so sorry, since stranger things happen, as to prefer to pay the great Erwin's fee.

Anyhow, the Tall Pine was there. Erwin had been so nicknamed, and that was the way he looked. He towered high over most men. Very tall and straight and slender, sharp of feature, alert of eye, aggressive of front, everything about him to the least turn of his head a testimony to the tireless energy that had won him his eminence. He made a stir indeed when he entered his appearance at the bar of the district court in Delray. Had there been no other attraction, plenty of people would still have come miles just to see Bill Erwin in action.

Fish, the county attorney, had been elected more because he was a Grand Army man and could pull the old soldier vote to the ticket than by reason of his legal ability and he was conscious of his limitations—so much so that the prospect of contending against Erwin frightened him, with the result that he made a pretext and called upon the Attorney General of the State to intervene and conduct the prosecution. The Attorney General couldn't refuse, but though he intervened he conducted the prosecution by deputy—a youthful assistant named Arbuckle was sent out to take charge.

Arbuckle, by a coincidence, had read law in Knute Nelson's office. Nelson's influence in high quarters had been enough to give the youngster a good start and land him, within a year or two, in the legal department of the St. P. M. & M. Railway. There, however, ill luck attended him—he did something or was something not to the liking of the big boss and the order came down from the throne direct to dispense with his services.

During a short recess in Andy Maguffin's trial lookers-on and listeners who were near enough overheard Erwin rallying Arbuckle.

"They tell me you and Jim Hill didn't hitch," the Tall Pine remarked, his affability in marked contrast with his nervous, abrupt manner when the trial was in progress.

"No, Jim didn't fancy the color of my hair—it's too red," Arbuckle replied, with a jolly laugh. He didn't seem to be taking his dismissal much to heart.

"In order to be just the kind of courtier Jim Hill likes in his royal entourage," Erwin chuckled, "I expect

a fellow ought to be like me—slim enough so he can fold up and knock his forehead on the ground."

"That's right, too," Arbuckle assented. "A fellow has got to be a halo polisher or he don't stack up very high in that company."

"I heard a good one on Jim Hill the other day—"

Erwin's knack for telling stories was only less well known than his skill in defending criminals, and lookers-on and listeners were keenly disappointed when the sound of the sheriff's gavel gave warning that the recess was at an end.

II

The evidence against Maguffin was wholly circumstantial. The strongest link in the chain, perhaps, was a handful of splinters identified as having been part of the barrel of a wooden pump. They had been found scattered about the scene of the explosion and the theory of the prosecution was that the blasting-powder had been tamped into the hollow of the barrel to make a bomb of it, the ends being sealed tight except where the fuse entered.

There were traces of green paint on the splinters. What connected them with Andy was the fact that nobody else in Gumbo used a wooden pump and the further fact that he had not long since discarded a wornout pump which had been painted green when it was new. Andy couldn't produce the barrel of the old pump. He claimed he didn't know what had become of it—he threw it out and left it lying, and if somebody had come along and taken the barrel it was nothing to him. But the prosecution maintained that

he had made a bomb of it to blow up Ingbretson's porch.

Another link in the chain was the testimony of a merchant in Delray. He made oath that he had sold Maguffin a five-pound can of gunpowder some weeks previous to the Ingbretson incident. The merchant would not have recalled the transaction, only that Maguffin had taken pains to explain that he intended to use the gunpowder in certain experiments which he had long contemplated—he had some low lying land which he wanted to drain and his notion was that a ditch could be blasted out more cheaply than it could be dug out.

Andy made no denial of having bought the powder. The reason he hadn't tried out the experiments which he had in mind was that the explosive got wet and he threw it away.

A jury was obtained only with the utmost difficulty. Every Swede called to the box was challenged by Erwin for implied bias and in every instance he made the challenge good by the admissions he extorted. There was something uncanny in the way he extorted admissions. The original panel of thirty veniremen was exhausted the first day without finding a solitary juror and after that the sheriff went scouring the county for talesmen. It was a contest between Moberg and the Tall Pine and Moberg got the worst of it. He wanted the jury to be made up at least in part of Swedes, but Erwin was determined that no Swede should be accepted, and none was. If Arbuckle had been equally skilful in keeping Yankees out of the box there could have been no trial in that county.

In cross-examination Erwin was terrific. Figuratively speaking, he picked the witnesses up in his two big bony hands and wrung them as he might wring a rag. Naturally they came up to the ordeal badly scared and he didn't give them a chance to recover from their fright. Ingbretson, testifying to the outrage, was involved in a dozen contradictions, though a more sincere and honest man never swore to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Halvor Halvorson, the groom of the evening, broke down and blubbered under the Tall Pine's merciless hammering. Sheriff Moberg was called as a witness and though he was not so easily browbeaten he left the stand gasping for breath and sweating profusely.

But the great advocate's culminating performance was his plea to the jury. To lookers-on and listeners it seemed a wonder that any twelve men of ordinary sensibilities could resist such an argument. Erwin's voice rose and fell, running a gamut between the roar of a tempest and the whisper of a midsummer zephyr. He raged up and down. He crouched with clasped hands upraised in the posture of entreaty. His eyes shot fire or filled with tears. His arms beat the air with the ferocity of a chained bear or hung limp as the wings of a dying bird.

The jury disagreed. It was understood that seven of the twelve voted for acquittal and the other five for conviction as charged with a recommendation to mercy.

An acquittal had been pretty generally expected, but a disagreement was the next thing to it. Technically the charge still stood, but nobody believed anything more would be done about it.

Probably the feeling between the Yankees and the

Swedes was the bitterest at that moment. Andy went swaggering back to Gumbo with a chip on his shoulder, and had the foreigners given way to their resentment there might have been the dickens to pay. But they were under the restraint of soberer counsels and though their quiet was ominous Andy went his way unmolested.

VI

"Take here the mainest lesson—less from books
—less from schools—
The common day and night—the common
earth and waters,
Your farm—your work, trade, occupation,
The Democratic wisdom underneath, like solid
ground for all."

VI

I

THE census of 1880 found enough new people in Minnesota to entitle the State to two more members of Congress and the Legislature at its next session, in January 1881, erected the Fifth District.

A great district in territorial extent and noteworthy in the character of its contributions to political history. It came into being just when the tide of foreign peasantry pouring into the country by every gateway rose to its flood and no congressional district anywhere exhibited more strikingly the clash of incongruous ideals thus brought into conflict.

Roughly speaking (as Andy Maguffin spoke), the Bloody Fifth reached all the way from hell to breakfast. More fastidiously it lay between the 45th parallel or thereabouts on the south and the Canadian border on the north, the head of the Great Lakes on the east and the Red River on the west. The apportionment being by population, the vast extent of the new district meant that it wasn't much settled as yet. There was Duluth at the eastern end, a fringe of counties along the southern edge had emerged from the pioneer stage of development, and the Red River Valley was filling up, but the remainder was primeval wilderness as yet untrod unless by hunters after big game or cruisers looking for pine timber.

With the discovery, before many years, of the rich

deposits of iron in the Vermilion and Mesaba ranges, there was destined to take place an inrush of foreigners not peasants, enough of them to call for still more Members of Congress and to give rise to problems of another sort. But for the present the agrarian element predominated. The Yankee and the Swede had at least so much in common—they were both farmers. Nor was that circumstance of trifling importance—no other, perhaps, had so much to do with the eventual adjustments.

Gumbo County was in the Fifth District and while Crow Wing and St. Louis and Otter Tail and some few other counties were more important politically, the strategists had an eye on Gumbo.

2

The first election was held in 1882, and sooner than the sluggish waters of spring had backed off the fat wheatfields of the valley it was known that the contest for the seat in Congress lay between two Republican candidates—Charles F. Kindred, of Brainerd, and Knute Nelson, of Alexandria.

Kindred was a Yankee. Nelson, though born in Norway, was rated a Swede—Minnesota politics hadn't learned as yet to distinguish between these two nearly related nationalities.

Kindred was known to be wealthy in his own right—a capitalist with heavy investments in a number of large enterprises, among them a gigantic waterpower in the Mississippi near Brainerd. Nelson, on the other hand, was a poor man—a country lawyer.

A striking peculiarity of the contest was the way interests outside of the district were drawn into it,

mostly in Kindred's behalf. Newspapers especially—though it wasn't properly their fight, they took a lively part. There were several big dailies in St. Paul and Minneapolis, a hundred miles or more away from the nearest confines of the Fifth, which pretty much forgot the contests in their own districts while they filled their pages with broadsides for Kindred.

The most obvious inference, be it right or wrong, was the inference commonly drawn. If these newspapers hadn't been hired to exert their influence in furtherance of Kindred's ambitions, no less was believed of them, and the cry went up that the Brainerd man with his millions was trying to buy the seat.

It was a cry that hurt, too, and by way of countering it Kindred adherents brought out the charge that Jim Hill's millions were behind Nelson. Kindred, they reminded the world, spent his own money like the good fellow he was and should he be elected he would still be beholden to no man, whereas Nelson, taking their word for it, had sold himself out in order to get the money he was spending. Who so simple as to think Jim Hill would finance a proposition of that sort if he wasn't well assured of his return?

Kindred adherents openly asserted, at length, that Nelson was going to Congress, if he went, as Hill's man first, last and always, and they professed to know that plans were already perfected whereby the United States Government would be asked to bestow princely subsidies. Not grants of land necessarily—perhaps rich contracts for conveying the mails, or tariff concessions affecting trade with the Orient, toward which Hill was thought to have cast an eye, but anyway something big. Of course there was always good

money in such a man owning a Member of Congress.

It wasn't left to outside newspapers to do all the shouting. A daily was started in Brainerd, though the town wasn't anywhere near big enough to support it, and it became Kindred's immediate mouthpiece. It led the band, so to speak, and a large and noisy band it was, too. If a poll of the press in the Fifth District could have determined the result, Kindred would have been elected hands down.

The Gumbo *Voice* played in the band. J. Cardigan Clewel hadn't made much of a hit in his own country. The Yankees didn't like him because they thought he truckled to the Swedes and though he truckled to the Swedes he failed to win their favor. His mailing list contained only about two hundred paying subscribers when by rights it should have contained a thousand, and though the merchants of the town gave him some advertising patronage they paid with ill grace and beat down his rates till the revenues of the paper scarcely paid expenses. But with the announcement of Kindred's candidacy Clewel was straightway flush of funds, so that when he raised the Brainerd man's flag to the masthead the why and wherefore were no mystery.

The *Voice* earned its wages. Clewel had a real talent for sparkling sophistry and every week he printed fresh and breezy if not always logical arguments for Kindred. Kindred was a man of affairs—Clewel harped on that string continually. Did the great and growing Fifth District want an obscure country lawyer representing it in the nation's councils when it might have a man of affairs? A rustic so unused to urban ways that he wouldn't be safe in a crowded street, when

it might have a polished cosmopolitan to whom even the capitals of Europe were familiar ground? What sort of standing could a yokel as backward and bashful as Nelson ever achieve in Washington's brilliant officialdom? Of course he would be laughed at. His funny accent alone was enough to queer him, saying nothing about his homeknit wool socks.

That Nelson wore homeknit wool socks the *Voice* did not for a moment doubt. Every Swede wore them, summer and winter.

Andy Maguffin was for Kindred. Andy wouldn't give his suffrages to a Swede though he never voted for anybody, and he had other reasons. "I know Charley Kindred," he boasted. "I've worked for him and I can tell you he's the salt of the earth. Stuck up! Don't think it! I call him Charley when I meet him and he calls me Andy. He's that kind. Anybody that's ever worked for Charley Kindred will vote for him."

3

The Democrats, meanwhile, were doing nothing. None of that faith stood a ghost of a show in the Fifth District and though almost any Democrat might have the empty honor of the party's nomination for the asking, the honor was so exceedingly empty that nobody asked for it.

However, though the fight by that was once more in the Republican caucuses, a distinctly different situation confronted the strategists, for now the Swedes were up to snuff. They turned out almost to a man and they were neither dazed nor diffident. There was as yet no law regulating primary elections. The caucus had grown up in its own way and was still free to

go its own gait—unofficial and informal, governed to some extent by custom but always with plenty of loopholes left for trickery. The presiding officer's powers were limited only by his assurance in asserting them, especially where, as usually happened if any difficulty was foreboded, the front seats were packed with partisans who knew how to vote right and vote loud—so fortified and upheld he could jam through almost any motion or measure.

But now, though the party machinery by dint of shrewd manipulation was in the hands of the Kindred faction, the Swedes had been reading up and otherwise learning the ropes and they insisted upon their rights. Instead of the customary vote by acclamation, which left the chairman free to determine whether the ayes or the noes had it, they demanded a show of hands and they kept watch to see that the hands were counted. The long and short of it being that a new day had dawned and only too evidently it wasn't going to be a good day for those who were bent on making hay by the old methods.

There were scuffles and still the Swedes held up their end, boldly and without apology. Threatened with personal violence, they stood their ground nevertheless, and when the rough stuff was started they gave back as good as they were given.

4

In Gumbo, Pick Overturf was precinct chairman and likewise clerk of the board of education, with the keys of the schoolhouse in his keeping. There was nowhere else to hold the caucus and Pick, an ardent Kindred man, was not too scrupulous to give his cause the full

benefit. Trickery was so much the usual thing that even fairly honest men fell into the fashion.

The caucus was announced to be called to order at half-past seven o'clock in the evening and by seven the Swedes were gathered about waiting for the door to be unlocked. The building was dark and silent. It might have been five or ten minutes after seven when Pick came up with a barn lantern. He greeted several of the Swedes, for he was proud of preserving the forms of courtesy.

He got out his keys after some fumbling and, having opened the door, led the way into the schoolhouse. "Hello—who's here?" he exclaimed, pretending to be greatly amazed when the dim light of the lantern revealed the front seats already occupied by Kindred men. They had got in through a window under cover of the darkness and were massed up in the forward benches and the aisles between.

The trick didn't gain them much, however—indeed, the benefit of it was more than nullified by the bad manners of which the Swedes were thereupon guilty. John Wall, the son of ancient Vikings and himself a sailor before the mast on many voyages when a seaman wasn't a seaman unless he could climb. He mounted nimbly up over the desks and, if they were in his way, over heads and shoulders as well, and in a jiffy, or anyhow sooner than anything could be done to prevent him, he jumped down in the space left open in front of the chairman's table. Wall showed his countrymen how, and there were half a dozen right behind him and half a dozen more behind them—so many altogether that though Andy Maguffin and his gang rallied promptly and were strenuous in the en-

deavor to hold their ground, they failed to do so. The front of the room, instead of being packed for Kindred, was filled with members of both factions indiscriminately.

The issue was never for a moment in doubt after that. Only by underhanded work could Kindred delegates have been elected from Gumbo, for the reason that the Swedes were unanimously for Nelson and there were more than twice as many Swedes as Yankees in the precinct. Chairman Overturf did his utmost to save the day. He repeatedly gave his decision to the ayes when the noes certainly had it, or the other way round—he was there to serve. But his services went for nothing. Always somebody insisted on a count and always the count was in Nelson's favor.

Moberg and Ingbretson were chosen delegates to the county convention to be held at Delray the next day and they were instructed, though no instructions were needed, to vote steadfastly in support of the candidacy of Knute Nelson.

5

But the Kindred partisans, though so badly worsted in that first encounter, hadn't played their last card. When Moberg and Ingbretson duly presented their credentials at Delray they found that they weren't the only delegates claiming to represent Gumbo. Pick Overturf and Andy Maguffin were there and presented credentials likewise.

Moreover it was certain, should the Kindred faction by hook or by crook gain control of the county convention, that Overturf and Maguffin would be seated. Of course their credentials were not valid, but that

fact didn't make the least difference—they would be seated notwithstanding if there were enough Kindred votes in the convention to control.

Indeed, that was exactly what happened to the delegates from Gumbo town to the county convention—Overturf and Maguffin were actually seated instead of Moberg and Ingbretson, though Moberg and Ingbretson had been elected by a large majority in the caucus. In other precincts the Swedes were either not so numerous or else they had been outgeneraled; anyhow they failed to control the county convention at Delray and the result was that the delegates chosen there to represent Gumbo County in the district convention were Kindred men, instructed by resolution to employ every fair means to bring about his nomination.

Needless to say, the word fair didn't mean much in that connection.

But two could play at the shady game, and when presently the district convention assembled there was not only the Kindred delegation claiming to represent Gumbo County but a Nelson delegation as well. Furthermore the shoe was on the other foot now. The Swedes had the whip-hand in the district convention and they saw no reason why they shouldn't conform with the established usages and seat the Nelson delegates from Gumbo County.

If the merits of the conflicting credentials were considered it was only in a perfunctory way—merits cut very little figure. The Nelson delegates might with some show of reason contend that the credentials of the Kindred delegates had been vitiated by the refusal of the county convention to seat the fairly elected precinct delegates from Gumbo town—there was that peg

on which an argument might be hung. But the factions had small use for such pegs—whichever of them could muster the votes took the bacon without apology.

The district convention wound up the series—it nominated Nelson to be representative in Congress and the way the lines of battle had been drawn its action couldn't be called anything but a victory for the Swedes. To that extent J. Cardigan Clewel, who had burned his bridges behind him and couldn't gain anything further by truckling, might justly exclaim, as he did exclaim, in italics by way of vehemence, that the Fifth District of Minnesota was given over to be a province of the kingdom of Sweden.

But the end was not yet. The clans were gathering for another battle still noisier and smokier.

6

It was in the hour of defeat that the good party man proved his quality. His title never read so clear as when, his party having chosen somebody else to be its candidate and the bearer of its standard in preference to him, he turned to and loyally supported the ticket nevertheless and notwithstanding.

Kindred failed to measure up. Nobody ever had a fairer opportunity to show how good a party man he was, but he didn't embrace it.

His string of newspapers hadn't a word to say the first day after Nelson's nomination, but they couldn't keep still forever and the language they held when they spoke at length sufficiently indicated what was about to happen.

First and foremost they wished it understood that they were Republican newspapers—they began with

renewing, as it were, their confession of faith. Nobody could be more thoroughly committed than they were to the cardinal article which held that party differences should be threshed out and adjusted within the party. Such differences were bound to arise and when they arose, so far from being blameworthy, they should be welcomed as signs of vigorous health. But never should they be suffered to go so far as to weaken the party's strength in the face of the common foe.

So much for the general doctrine. But a general doctrine had always its exceptions, as every practical man knew. No practical man was going to deny that exceptional circumstances might justify a departure from the usual practise and that the situation in the Fifth District presented such circumstances the Kindred newspapers, each in its own way, but unanimously, were free to maintain.

Especially important in that connection, so important as to be in their estimation decisive, was the circumstance of there being no common foe to figure in the reckoning. Whatever happened, a Republican was going to be elected to Congress, and that being so the interests of the party were not put in jeopardy by factional contests. On the theory, and they made no scruple of proclaiming it theirs—on the theory that the worst Republican was more to be chosen than the best Democrat, these newspapers wouldn't hesitate for a moment to give Nelson their heartiest support if there were the remotest chance of his being beaten at the polls by a Democrat. But inasmuch as there was no such chance they felt that they were dispensed from the obligation which they would otherwise be the last to disavow.

They made no bones of saying right out that they were not satisfied with Nelson's nomination. They didn't believe that he was the choice of the Republicans of the district. The forces back of him had been very active, with the result that the voters who favored his candidacy had turned out to the caucuses whereas the voters who favored Kindred, trusting too much to the merit of their cause to give it strength, had neglected to attend. No figures could be quoted in proof of their contention, nevertheless the Kindred newspapers had advices which convinced them that if the voters of the Fifth District should be given the opportunity to choose once more between Nelson and Kindred there would be another story to tell.

Why not, since the voters were practically all Republicans anyway? How was the party going to suffer any injury by regarding the election in November as a supplementary caucus, only with the difference that each voter would cast a printed ballot instead of merely shouting his preference or holding up his hand to be counted?

If the Kindred newspapers were right nothing, they submitted, could be more outrageous than to let Nelson be elected by default. There was no crime so dastardly as cheating a clear majority out of their rightful ascendency. If Nelson was the choice of a minority, to permit him to go to Washington as the representative of the Fifth District would be to make woful mock of the most cherished principles of American free government.

No doubt Nelson and his adherents would deny that he was the choice of a minority, but if their denial rested on conviction why should they fear a retrial?

Such was the song sung by the Kindred press from the big dailies in St. Paul and Minneapolis down to the Gumbo *Voice.*

Of course it meant that Kindred was going to bolt.

He did bolt, and more vials of wrath were poured out.

7

Though the newspapers and others outside the district took an exceedingly active interest in the contest and by so doing gave the campaign an unusual character, a peculiarity hardly less noteworthy was the way the stump in the Fifth District of Minnesota was not taken by big guns of the party at large. They, at least, found reason to regard the fight as a good fight to keep out of. With a regularly nominated Republican candidate and a bolting candidate who claimed every title but regularity, and loudly complained that he had been cheated out of it—with these two in the field and nobody pretending to know which way the cat would jump, big guns without exception chose to be detained elsewhere. The stump in the Fifth District had no attractions for them.

James G. Blaine, for instance,—no gun bigger. Bob Ingersoll's plumed knight. Heir to the political strength of the martyred Garfield. Already grooming for his renowned battle with Grover Cleveland two years hence. Blaine's silvery tongue was heard that fall no farther away than Bill King's Fair in Minneapolis, but it wasn't heard in the Fifth District.

William Windom, too. Minnesota's favorite son, to whom she had given her modest ten votes for the Presidential nomination in 1880. Secretary of the Treasury in Garfield's cabinet and destined to be re-

called to that great post in another period of financial storm and stress. Windom wasn't grooming for anything at the moment, nevertheless he found a pretext for staying out of the Bloody Fifth.

Even Mark H. Dunnell. Not so famous, but a figure in Congress. There was more than a chance that Dunnell might be the next Speaker of the national House of Representatives. His district was the First of Minnesota, making him rather a near neighbor, but he conveniently found his own fences demanding his whole attention.

So that the popular rallies staged by the two factions were scantily graced by the presence of the great of earth. But they were none the less lively, for that. Kindred had no experience in public speaking and did not take the stump personally, but he had henchmen amply competent to make up the deficiency. Nelson, on the other hand, though his foreign accent hampered his eloquence somewhat, delivered his message to the populace directly. To whatever extent talk could keep the pot boiling there was no lack of it.

Gumbo had a place in Nelson's list of dates. That particular constituency might not be considered as important as some, since it was certain to give him a majority anyway, but he had a personal feeling for the little town and he promised to make it in his way to stop off there and speak.

In the afternoon. He reserved his evenings for the larger and more doubtful places and anyway an afternoon rally was more convenient for a farming community. Farmers came flocking, too, on the appointed day—so many of them that Gumbo had never seen such a crowd.

A platform had been erected for the speakers, with seats and a canopy to shade them. There were neither seats nor shade for the crowd, but though the day bid fair to be hot the discomfort wasn't going to keep anybody away.

The Gumbo Silver Cornet Band made its first public appearance that day. Its members were Swedes and they donated their services. The music might have been better and it might have been worse. It served well enough to fill up the gaps and make the time of waiting pass less tediously.

Ingbretson had been designated to preside during the speaking and Moberg was marshal of the parade. He was mounted on horseback and wore a sash.

Kindred partisans in Gumbo were outnumbered, but they were not hiding their heads. They were far from relishing the demonstration in Nelson's honor and they let their feelings appear. The parade was the part they liked least, looking upon it as a species of insult. Andy Maguffin, though not to be rated an excessively intemperate man, started drinking early in the day and by noon he was loudly boasting that the parade would never come off.

8

Though its incidental effect whereby it so affronted Kindred onlookers might not be altogether unintentional, the main purpose of the parade was to meet Nelson at the train and escort him to the platform, the pomp and circumstance being a mark of respect. The train was scheduled to stop at Gumbo between one and two o'clock, and by noon the preparations were well under way.

The marshal's place was at the head of the proces-

sion, but for the present and until the march should be taken up, he was here and there and everywhere, for if order had been brought out of the confusion it still remained to be kept out, perhaps the harder task of the two. Moberg made no dashing figure, to tell the truth. He rode a heavy, plodding plow-horse and the sash he wore was a shabby rather than a sprightly touch. Indeed, there was something outlandish and in doubtful taste about the sash. But, withal, the parson made an efficient marshal—he knew what needed doing and he got it done.

In the forefront, next after the marshal, marched the band. Its members were not in uniform and by that they presented a motley array, but they preserved at least a semblance of military formation, spreading out to the width of the street, with the silver cornets forward and the drums bringing up the rear. They played several selections while they waited and were loudly cheered, though some of the cheers were tinged with an irony that boded no good.

Gumbo boasted a livery-stable and the livery-stable boasted a hack. The hack had seen its best days, but its top could still be so opened out and folded back as to give the vehicle a statelier air—with four horses attached, the equipage was by no means devoid of dignity. In it the guest of honor was to be conveyed. Three of the four seats behind the driver were already occupied by Chairman Ingbretson and two others of the Nelson faction forming a committee of reception.

The hack was assigned a position right behind the band, and behind the hack came the rank and file to an indeterminate number—as many as cared to join. They had never been drilled to march, but they knew

how to keep step and they looked as much like soldiers as they could.

These undistinguished citizens bore the banners, a dozen or more of them, every banner being inscribed with a sentiment. The usual device was a strip of cloth stretched between two poles—held up in that way the inscription could be the more readily made out.

The sentiments were in the regulation political style. In none of them did you detect any attempt to spare the enemy's feelings.

For instance: "Is Your Vote for Sale? Then Nelson Doesn't Get It."

Another: "A Good Sport Doesn't Bolt."

Still another: "Every Vote for Nelson Is a Nail in the Coffin of Crooked Politics."

Most insulting of the lot, perhaps: "The Man Who Buys Other Men's Votes Will Sell His Own."

9

About half an hour before the train was due, with everything ready for the start, Clay, the station-agent, came pushing and shouldering through the crowd and handed Ingbretson a telegram. The agent was flushed and out of breath—evidently he considered the message weighty or he wouldn't be taking so much trouble.

Ingbretson's demeanor was in keeping. He tore open the telegram nervously and having read it beckoned to Moberg. The parson reined up beside the hack and a hush fell upon the multitude while they two consulted in whispers. In a moment Ingbretson stood up between the seats.

"Mr. Nelson," he announced, "has missed his train at Crookston and cannot be with us to-day."

Androscoggin Maguffin stood not far away. He threw up his hat—a gesture of joy.

"Hooray for Kindred!" he shouted.

He was farther gone in drink than anybody else, but there were others sufficiently lost to prudence, not to mention good manners, to uphold him in his wanton disregard of the amenities, and cheers for Kindred were heard.

"Nelson's licked anyhow!" crowed Maguffin.

Nettled by the failure of their great plans for the day, the Nelson faction were in no mood to rest easy under taunts like that. They might have done better to call off their demonstration, swallowing their discomfiture as best they might, but they did no such thing. Ingbretson and Moberg whispered further, the marshal stooping down from his horse and the chairman leaning out from his seat in the hack. Ingbretson straightened up stiffly.

"The marshal wishes me to say," he proclaimed, in a loud voice, "that we will parade anyway."

"Like hell you will!" scoffed Andy Maguffin, almost in the chairman's face.

Moberg, grim and resolute, reined in ahead of the band. He motioned to the leader and the musicians struck up a lively fanfare. Ingbretson and the committee in the hack took up their position, and the rank and file fell into step with banners held aloft.

In no quarter was there any faltering.

Loose rocks of handy sizes were unknown in Gumbo —if you were looking for something to pick up and throw, it would have to be something else. But the

Kindred forces were not without provision. Somewhere, somehow, a bushel or so of spoiled eggs had been obtained, and the command to march was the signal for a shower of these, hurled by hands not easily identified, but finding in almost every instance their mark. The banners were the particular targets, but the marshal was not overlooked, nor the band, nor the chairman.

Nobody was much hurt, but there was nothing the Kindred party might have done so well calculated to rouse the wrath of the Swedes. They had stood a great deal and they could stand no more. None of them wanted to parade after that—to the last man, they wanted to fight. Andy Maguffin, too drunk to count the consequences, was in his element, and when the exasperated Nelson men lowered their banners and charged, he didn't fall back but charged likewise, filling the air with oaths expressive of his savage delight.

"Come on—now's our chance to clean out the damned Swedes!" he yelled.

The upshot was a real riot, while it lasted. Happily, there were no firearms in the crowd. Men hadn't any weapons but their fists, or perhaps the staff of a banner clutched up. But, even so, there would have been heads cracked and blood shed only for the intervention of a strange incident—strange and wholly unexpected, and of instant effect in stilling the storm.

It was never known just who brought the news. Several may have had a hand in it. But, however that might be, all at once the word was flying from lip to lip:

"Jim Hill's in town—his train is down to the station right now!"

10

There was no parade—so far had Androscoggin Maguffin prophesied truly. But, on the other hand, it wasn't the rowdy tactics of the enemy that broke the parade up—the riot was over almost as soon as it began, lost and forgotten in a rush for the station, with Swedes and Yankees joining indiscriminately. No man in Gumbo had ever seen Jim Hill, and the desire to see him was so great and so universal that not even in their wrath could inhabitants turn a deaf ear to the word.

A rush for the station; and they were none too soon. The special train, running wild, had halted at Gumbo for orders and, having got them, was already on its way when the advance guard of the crowd ran up. The rear end of the rear coach was a deep balcony and in it, looking vastly cool and at ease, some men were gathered in an informal group. They regarded the crowd with interest not unmingled with amusement—some of them, indeed, were seen to laugh as the train drew away.

Particularly conspicuous, since he sat near the rail, was a big man with a smooth red face and a very bald head. "There he is—that's him!" somebody bawled out.

"No, Jim Hill's a sawed-off, with bushy whiskers and long hair!" bawled somebody else.

The amount of it being that everybody was up in the air, so to speak—even Clay, the agent, though Jim Hill paid his wages. Clay wouldn't know Jim Hill if he saw him; further, he had been too busy with his key to indulge his curiosity, and even though he hadn't

been so busy, it wasn't the agent's place to be asking whose train it was or who was aboard.

In point of fact, the group of men gazing out from the balcony of the rear coach were eastern capitalists on their way to Winnipeg. They were Mr. Hill's guests, but Mr. Hill wasn't with them. Nevertheless, the magic of his name had wrought a wonder in Gumbo.

II

The campaign drew on to a hectic finish and it ended with another victory for Nelson—the verdict of the polls was in his favor and from it there was no appeal. But far more important than any personal significance was the proof the election afforded of the political solidarity of the Swedes. These foreigners had learned how to act together and acting together they were a force to be reckoned with. From that day forward no party with its wits about it put a ticket in the field without giving the best places to the Swedes.

Kindred fell out of the political picture. He was still a big man in the commercial way, but he never tried for another political office. As for Nelson, having won his first battle so handsomely, his way thereafter was easy—any office he wanted he got. He served three terms in the Lower House of Congress, was twice Governor of Minnesota, and resigned that place to become United States Senator.

He was Senator when he died, full of years and honors.

VII

"They say best men are molded out of faults,
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad."

VII

I

ANDROSCOGGIN MAGUFFIN'S days in Gumbo were not many after the election of 1882. He had always been a rolling stone and he was too old a dog to learn new tricks. Such men have their uses. So long as there is a frontier they are needed to keep it pushing on. But when they have helped to blaze the way to new countries their work is done. The drudgery of taming the wilderness demands more steadfast souls.

Then, too, Andy had his special reasons for seeking new fields of endeavor.

His homestead was a Government quarter, and a mile from his nearest corner-post Eric Odquist had two forties of railroad land. Eric didn't come to Gumbo until 1882, but he was blessed with uncommon luck and made such rapid progress that he wasn't behindhand in point of prosperity. He had more than a thousand bushels of good wheat to haul to the elevator after the tumult and the shouting incident to the campaign had died away and honest men could go back to their everyday concerns.

Eric took no conspicuous part in politics, however. He ran foul of Andy Maguffin, but it was in another relation altogether.

Odquist's land lay between Andy's and the Widow Larkin's. Andy and the widow had been keeping company more than a year and his attentions were so

marked and so seemingly not unwelcome that people were looking for a wedding almost any day. The widow had to make entry, in the first place, as a single woman, but no provision of the Homestead Act stood in the way of her taking to herself a husband subsequently, for better or for worse. Andy and the widow were free to marry and, being married, they would own between them half a section of as good dirt as any in the valley. It looked like a bargain.

But when they had been keeping company a year or so people heard that Eric Odquist was likewise paying the widow attentions that were more than neighborly. That meant a situation worth watching, and it was watched.

Not that there was much doubt as to the outcome, though. Eric was a gigantic specimen of a race cast in a large mold, but he had never seemed in the least aggressive and people had a notion that Andy Maguffin would eat him up. What Andy lacked in weight he more than made up in ferocity. That he would show the big Swede his place was pretty well taken for granted.

Naturally, the widow would have something to say about the disposal of her hand and heart, but she was a Yankee and by that not likely to prefer a Swede to Andy, rough hewn though he was. She had a tranquil, easy temper and she wasn't greatly given to advertising her thoughts, but it was the neighborhood's best guess that Eric's prospects in that quarter were not bright.

Of a sudden, however, and without warning, Andy Maguffin vanished and the places that had known him knew him no more forever.

2

A mystery, in short, and not without the grisly potentialities that give to mysteries their especial zest. Andy having turned up missing, neighbors went to his farm and found the horses in the growing wheat, where, though forsaken by their master, they were making out very well. But they were the only life about the place—of Andy himself there wasn't a trace anywhere.

Because he had been keeping company with her, neighbors thought at once of the Widow Larkin—she might be expected to know as much as anybody about Andy's comings and goings. But when they inquired of her they found her even more reticent than usual, though reticence was so much her habit.

Significantly so, neighbors thought. She didn't refuse right out to answer them, but they were somehow made to suspect, from the way she answered, that she might tell more if she would. She was keeping something back.

Otherwise she wouldn't have been so undisturbed. Or, anyway, so they thought. If she didn't know more than she was telling, it stood to reason that she would have been a lot more worked up over Andy's disappearance. In point of fact, she wasn't worked up the least bit, so far as outward manifestations went.

Did she know (neighbors speaking) where Andy Maguffin was?

She (the widow speaking) did not.

When had she last seen him?

The previous Thursday—and it was now Monday. Thursday, about nine o'clock at night.

Where?

At her house.

Did he say anything at that time about going away, to be gone some time?

Not to her.

Did he seem to be in his usual health?

So far as she had observed.

In other words, there wasn't much satisfaction to be got out of Mistress Larkin, and neighbors thought next of Eric Odquist—Andy and he were known to have been rivals and, that being so, he might be in a position to throw some light on the deepening mystery. Furthermore, when they reflected, they couldn't recall having seen Eric about for several days, though not being so much a public character he wasn't as likely to be missed as Andy. Had the rivals made an end of each other, like the celebrated Kilkenny cats?

Much to their astonishment, neighbors found Eric laid up in bed, and even more reticent than the widow, for he couldn't be induced to say when last he had seen Andy Maguffin or anything about him. The big Swede had the look of being in a bad way. He could lift his arms, but he couldn't sit up or turn over in bed. His pulse was rapid and his flushed face betokened high fever. He pretended not to know what ailed him, but he expressed every confidence that he would recover. No, he didn't need any help—when they spoke of sending for a doctor and having somebody stay with him and look after him he forebade them. More than hinted, in fact, that he would be best pleased to have them go away and leave him alone.

3

A party watched that night and saw the Widow Larkin enter Eric's cabin, bringing food. They crept up to the windows and peered in just as the widow, with a washbasin and bandages at hand, exposed what had every appearance of a stab in Eric's back, under the shoulderblade. She was very gentle and deft, as if she might have had experience in that kind of work, and when she had finished dressing the wound she tidied up the room and set out the food she had brought where Eric could reach it. He ate with evident relish and not much like a sick man, and after that the widow sat by the bedside and they held hands and talked and visited. If there wasn't a thorough understanding between them, neighbors watching knew not what else to make of the signs.

What they reported was enough to start talk of the most damaging character. Right away it was being asserted that Andy Maguffin had fallen a victim of foul play—Eric Odquist had done him to death and his body was buried somewhere not far away. Of course Andy had not died as meekly as a lamb led to the slaughter—whoever knew him could believe that he had put up a fight, or rather couldn't believe that he hadn't, and the stab in Eric's back was his mark.

As for the Widow Larkin, it couldn't be doubted that she had been a party to the transaction—accessory after the fact if not before. Indeed, the talk as it concerned her grew uglier and uglier. She had played Andy false. She had beguiled Andy to his undoing and if she hadn't helped kill him she had at any rate buried the body, Eric being so badly wounded

that he couldn't attend to that necessary detail. She had stolen up while the men were at grips and brained Andy with a hammer. She had lured Andy to her house in order that Eric might set upon him when he was off his guard. At length there was no deed too dastardly for the gossip to lay at Mistress Larkin's door.

Why wasn't the sheriff of the county taking some action? Was it because Eric was a Swede and the sheriff likewise? Why hadn't the Grand Jury been especially convened? Why were no arrests being made? Were such things to be done with impunity so long as a Swede did them?

You heard wild proposals. Some thought a coat of tar and feathers should be administered where it was most deserved—two coats, in fact, since distinctions of sex were altogether out of place. Others would have it that tar and feathers were too light a punishment—a lynching would be more like the proper thing.

Lynchings so far north of Mason and Dixon's line were not common as yet, but it might come to that if the law didn't bestir itself.

4

Moberg was still sheriff and by implication biased, not only as the countryman of Eric Odquist, but likewise as the known personal enemy of Androscoggin Maguffin. Of course, the deep damnation of Andy's taking off wasn't going to keep Moberg awake nights. In his heart, no doubt, he was glad of it.

Anyhow, he made no arrests and took no steps toward having the Grand Jury convened. What he did, and that so quietly that the public knew nothing

of it until it had been done, was to exercise his pastoral authority. It didn't extend over the Widow Larkin, but Eric Odquist was so far subject to it that when Moberg went to him and besought him to tell the whole truth, concealing nothing, he was prevailed upon. Anyhow, he vowed it was the truth, and the woman, after some hesitation, confirmed his testimony in every particular.

The story they told showed Andy up in a pretty bad light. He hadn't been murdered, but he had meditated murder the most foul and he had fled to parts unknown in the belief that murder he had done. He had treacherously sunk his knife in Eric's back and left him for dead, stretched across the threshold of the Widow Larkin's door.

That Eric hadn't died was wholly due to the widow's assiduous care. She stanched the flow of blood and dressed the wound and as soon as he recovered his senses and a little strength she rigged a kind of drag for an ambulance and took him home. A woman of strong character under stress, the widow had shown herself to be, and not afraid of difficulties fit to appal the stoutest heart. She and Eric agreed between them not to say a word against Andy Maguffin—he had fled under circumstances such that he wasn't in the least likely ever to come back and they were so thankful to be rid of him that they willingly kept silence as to the deed he had done.

Moberg was satisfied, personally, pastorally and officially; but neighbors, or some of them, still had their misgivings. The feeling between the races played its part and Yankees couldn't rest till a Yankee, in the person of the county attorney, came out to Gumbo and

went over the ground independently. But the county attorney was likewise persuaded of the truth of Eric Odquist's testimony and his findings served to ease the situation. At least, there was no more talk of lynching or even of tar and feathers.

5

Not that Eric and the widow ceased to give offense, however. They still gave offense, and though a different sort and not so noisome it was noisome enough.

Why didn't they marry?

With Andy Maguffin out of the way, neighbors, regardless of race now, couldn't see why there should be any further delay; and when the pair delayed and delayed, not only keeping up their intimacy the while, but flaunting it before the face of the world, it was deemed a scandal. Even though it should be a fact that the widow had behaved no worse than imprudently either with Maguffin or with Odquist, it was equally a fact that a woman couldn't do as she was doing and expect to be tolerated in a decent community.

The scandal came at length to such a pitch that Justice Overturf and Parson Moberg made it up between them to see what the right kind of expostulation would do to mend matters. Overturf undertook to talk with the widow and Moberg undertook to talk with Eric.

The remonstrances of neither availed much.

The justice's especially—they fell flat. Mrs. Larkin was plowing with a gangplow and four horses when he made his approach and she was not pleased to be asked to knock off and talk awhile. "The ground is almost too dry to break right now—I got to hustle or

I'll have to quit before the job is finished," she pointed out, but Pick promised to make it short and she reluctantly swung her team out of the furrow.

Pick made it short and blunt—did she know that she was being talked about as no honest woman could afford to be talked about?

Her face went hard and that was her only answer. If the justice looked for encouragement he looked in vain.

Nevertheless, he persisted. About Eric Odquist now—a good, sober, industrious fellow, but why didn't he and she marry? Why were they holding off so?

"What if we don't want to marry just yet awhile?" the widow retorted, curtly.

Of course they were under no compulsion—so much Pick was free to confess, whether as a magistrate or neighbor merely. But he ventured to remind her that it wasn't thought seemly for a man and woman not married to be so—well, thick.

"Thick!" the widow repeated after him, scornfully, and with no word more she swung her team back into the furrow.

Overturf knew not what to say.

"Larkin used to tell," she shot back over her shoulder, as the plows dipped into the mold, "about a man he heard of that got rich minding his own business. It sounds like a pretty big story, but I reckon there might be such a man."

Moberg had scarcely better luck, though he met with a different reception. That his influence with Eric Odquist was great, previous developments went to show, but it wasn't great enough to extort any promise of amendment now. Eric acknowledged that a man

and woman situated as he and the Widow Larkin were ought to marry or else break off, but he wouldn't consent to do either. The only satisfaction the parson brought away with him was the little to be got from Eric's assurance, backed by nothing but his bare word, that everything was going to turn out right in the end. "I don't know what to think—I can't make out what they're at," Moberg confided to Pick.

"Maybe they could be scared with a White Cap letter or something like that," the justice suggested, desperately.

Moberg shook his head. The White Caps were a mysterious, not to say mythical, order whose exploits, or the exploits of others in their name, had got them popularly regarded with fear and trembling, and that was the sentiment Overturf thought of invoking. But the parson had his doubts—they might scare Eric by such an expedient, but he didn't believe they could scare the widow.

6

Eric's assurance, though so far from convincing in the first instance, was made good in the event. That is to say, everything turned out as well as the neighbors could ask. But not until they had been treated to another surprise or two, and notably when, exactly a year from the day when Andy took his departure so unceremoniously, papers were filed with the clerk of the district court in Delray, wherein and whereby Lucia Maguffin brought a suit at law against Androscoggin Maguffin.

It was an action for divorce and Lucia Maguffin, as neighbors in Gumbo learned to their unbounded amazement, was none other than the woman they had known as the Widow Larkin.

She was, and had been since five years before coming to Gumbo, Andy Maguffin's lawful wife.

She had to wait until Andy had been gone a year before she could bring a charge of desertion against him. She had other grounds for a divorce—cruelty and inhuman treatment among them—but she chose desertion, as many another woman has chosen desertion, because it made necessary no such painful disclosures.

The papers were filed and the trial took place as soon as the year was up, and neighbors were on hand in full force to hear the testimony. From it they learned that Mrs. Maguffin, as they had now to call her, had once been the Widow Larkin indeed, her first husband having been so named. She was married to Maguffin in Duluth on Christmas Day, 1876. They drifted about the country with varying luck till they heard about the railroad Jim Hill was building through to the Canadian border. It looked like a good chance to take up land and they resolved to make the most of it.

The fraud by which the woman had pretended to be unmarried was Maguffin's idea wholly, according to her story. Looking back now, she couldn't in the least understand how she had been got to consent to it, but always the man had some sort of influence over her, call it fear or what you would, so that he induced her to join in his rascally scheme. It was not till recently—specifically, since she made the acquaintance of Eric Odquist—that she had been able to shake off the spell and resist Maguffin's influence.

Andy's purpose, as she understood it, had been to hold the two quarters of land which they had fraudulently taken up until the property should be worth good

money and then sell out and decamp, with nobody the wiser. "He liked to play tricks that way—the devil was in him and he'd rather be tricky than not. It was small business cheating the Government out of a quarter-section of free land, but Maguffin enjoyed doing it. He didn't have any more conscience than a yellow dog and not half so much common decency!" she testified, spitefully.

Recalling some of Andy's undeniable good traits and the good deeds, not altogether few, which these traits had prompted him to do, neighbors thought the woman a little too harsh; but, whether or no, she got her divorce and she and Eric were married as soon as they could procure a license, Parson Moberg officiating.

They went to live on Eric's farm. The two quarters which Maguffin and his wife had homesteaded reverted to the Government because of the false entry, but the lawyers could discover no reason why Eric Odquist shouldn't homestead the quarter that his wife had plowed and planted, and he did so.

Their son, J. J. H. Odquist, inherited the two farms —the eighty acres which Eric bought from the railroad and the hundred and sixty acres which the Government deeded to him. Further, young Odquist fell heir to his father's strength of body and his mother's strength of mind and the two together make him an uncommon farmer. His barns are big and they are filled with stock as choice as any in that country.

His three initials? They stand for James J. Hill. It was his mother's choice. Too many boys, she always maintained, are named for Presidents. She would rather name hers for somebody who was really somebody and not just an accident.

VIII

"Of Justice—as if Justice could be anything but
the same simple law, expounded by natural
judges and saviors,
As if it might be this thing or that thing, ac-
cording to decisions."

VIII

I

A MORE neighborly feeling prevailed in Gumbo henceforth. Andy Maguffin had held spite longer, and a bitterer spite, partly for personal reasons and partly because it wasn't in his stubborn nature, having once taken a stand, to admit that he was wrong, and for the gratification of his spite he had done more than anybody else to stir up and keep alive the animosity toward the Swedes. Even before he went away Yankees had begun to search their reasons for harboring that animosity, and when he was gone, about the last reason went with him.

To help the good work along, the Swedes were less and less a peculiar people as the years went by. The old grandfathers and grandmothers never had the heart to give up their accustomed ways for the ways of the new world, though it was where they had cast their lot and where they expected to live out their days. But the younger generation were willing and even eager to fall into step, if for no other reason than that it was easier marching that way. So that the singularities that had got the Swedes laughed at in the beginning and looked down upon and at length disliked were much less in evidence now—so little in evidence that they could easily be indulged and overlooked.

In the progress toward conformity the children led the way. Only the oldest of them had ever seen

Sweden and even the oldest had forgotten what it was like. If they had beheld the ancient patriarch kissing the bit of dried turf and weeping over it they would have laughed with Andy Maguffin—the soil of the old country meant no more to them than it meant to him. Furthermore, where the elders had been proud of their nationality, the youngsters were actually ashamed of being Swedes. They wanted to be thought Yankees—to act and look like Yankees was their constant study. They learned English and they refused to learn Swedish—in many a family it came to pass that the grandmothers and grandfathers of the first generation couldn't converse with the grandchildren of the third unless the parents of the second generation were at hand to act as interpreters.

The public school was a powerful agency of conciliation, though there was no conscious effort to make it so. The children of the two races worked together at their books and played together at their games and so grew up together, and there was no preserving any permanent barrier between them. They had their little feuds and out of the feuds arose quarrels without number, but never was the cleavage between the races—always there were Swedes and Yankees on both sides. In time, too, they had their love affairs and Swedes were by no means left to pair with Swedes or nobody.

Some of the love affairs were serious. Christine Palmgren was a pretty girl and clever and kind, and Hannibal Hamlin Knox was looked upon as a thoroughly lucky lad when she showed him favor. Nobody ever so much as hinted that she wasn't as good as he—that is, nobody among the children in school. In after

years they married and Christine's father gave them a farm where, if they didn't live happily ever after, they prospered greatly and were as happy as most. Any of the Knoxes will tell you that Ham's Swede wife has been the making of him—she has the qualities that he lacks and so they pull together to the best advantage.

But the most potent influence making for peace among these neighbors was the growing sense of common sorrows.

2

There were bound to be sorrows. The first inhabitants to come, in part no doubt because they expected less, were abundantly blessed, but no sooner does mortal man gain what he has called enough than he calls it so no longer—he expects more and if he doesn't get it his cup is poisoned with discontent. What inhabitants of Gumbo would once have regarded as famous good fortune presently became in their estimation indifferent or even bad fortune, and they could be so ungrateful as to bemoan a lot no worse than that with which they would once have been satisfied.

Not that there weren't any real setbacks, though. In the fall of 1883 those who had eyes to see observed a great many curious small holes bored in the dry crust of the earth and when they dug down to see what might be at the bottom they found clusters of what looked like some insect's eggs. They were eggs indeed, laid there by the dreaded grasshopper, and the warm sun of spring hatched them out in millions. Millions of them came boiling up out of the ground, a very plague of locusts, and everything green and growing fell a prey to them. The wheat no sooner thrust its

brave spears up into the light than the grasshoppers fell on and devoured it and the fields could not have been more desolate if a fire had swept over them.

Farmers didn't get their seed back that year.

When the grasshoppers had eaten everything in sight they flew away and were seen no more, but there were other plagues waiting to be let loose. From May till November of 1884 no rain fell and the ground baked so hard and dry that it couldn't be plowed for the next year's crop. That wouldn't have been so bad if the winter hadn't brought such heavy snows—the deep drifts were so long thawing and spring waters were so slow to drain off and dry up and the plowing which should have been done the previous fall was so long delayed that thousands and thousands of acres of wheat were not sowed until June.

That meant a belated harvest, but not necessarily a bad harvest if only the frosts would hold off. There had been falls in Minnesota without frost to hurt until well along in September and by the last of September wheat sowed in June would be safe. Should there be such another fall now the crop would do very well. But there wasn't—though such a season was never so sorely needed, it didn't come to pass. Frosts were extraordinarily early. Killing frost in August, with the wheat in the dough. Farmers got their seed back and more, but it was poor stuff—a grain so shrunken that the best of it graded only No. 2 and immense quantities of it made no grade whatever.

A bitter pill for farmers who had never yet brought anything to market but No. 1 hard.

Another hook to the wind was the price. With trifling variations up and down, a dollar a bushel had

so far been paid at the trackside for No. 1, the poorer grades ranging in proportion; but there was a big slump in 1885 and though the farmers were better off that year than they had been after the grasshopper scourge, nevertheless they felt poorly paid for their labor.

Speaking once more of man the mortal, not only is he given to forming inordinate expectations, but as well, when the day of disappointment comes, to charging somebody with having wronged him. Sorrows become grievances, in other words, and if the farmers of Gumbo County couldn't readily find anybody to blame for the grasshoppers or the drought or the deep snows, the price of wheat presented no such difficulty. It didn't take them long to make the important discovery that the price of wheat was governed by the speculative bulls and bears of the Chicago Board of Trade and the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and that whatever tune those worthies chose to play the farmer had nothing to do but dance to it.

Of course, the fact that a thing may or may not be so is no reason why it can't be discovered, if only a sufficient pressure of discontent enters into the reckoning; and there was no lack of it in Gumbo County. Soon farmers were crying out against the injustice and saying they were great fools to submit to it. If they didn't know as yet just what they could do about it, at any rate they weren't going to suffer in silence any longer.

It was in these lean years of short crops and low prices that the Farmers' Alliance waxed strong in Minnesota. The Alliance was out to right the farmer's wrongs or know the reason why. The ancient Grange,

never very active so far west, had the farmer's good at heart, too, but it wasn't so willing to seek his salvation through politics. The Alliance, on the other hand, was almost from the first and without apology a political adventure bent on the enactment of laws designed to ameliorate the farmer's condition. They were such laws, for the most part, as the old parties deemed too radical to be wise, but the Alliance had no misgivings.

In its ranks Swedes and Yankees marched shoulder to shoulder, their racial antipathies forgotten in the sense of a common cause, and if there was need of an evangel to make them more and more conscious of that cause it was ready at hand in Gumbo.

3

J. Cardigan Clewel was of the tribe of journalists, more numerous then than now perhaps, who can't keep their heads above water without the doubtful income to be derived from the sale of a paper's influence. Hush money, some might call it, or even blackmail, but anyhow if Clewel had been forced to depend upon the ordinary revenues from advertising and circulation he couldn't have survived six months.

Kindred was a generous source of supply until, with his final defeat at the polls, he had no further use for newspapers. He was out of politics for good. You heard that his lavish expenditures during the campaign had brought him to the verge of financial ruin, but, however that might be, he was done paying out his money to win public favor through the press, and J. Cardigan Clewel would have to find a new patron.

He turned to Jim Hill.

Hill wasn't in politics personally, but you could un-

derstand how politics might be an interest not unrelated to his ambitious projects. That there was any public office, even the highest, which he would wish bestowed upon him nobody believed for a moment—he wasn't the office-holding kind. But that he wouldn't be averse to exercising a certain control in political affairs was being generally taken for granted.

Clewel could the more readily take it for granted for the reason that if Hill meant to gain a political ascendency he would stand in need of journalistic backing—without such backing no man could get far in the game of politics. Indeed, though his purpose might not be altogether plain, it was no secret that he already had a good deal of money invested in newspaper property. The St. Paul *Globe* and the Duluth *Tribune,* to mention no others, were known to belong to him.

That these papers had been in financial straits was known, too, and it might be pretended that Hill's only interest had been to tide them over the rocks. If his object was to build up the country served by his railroad in order that the country might be in a position to swell his railroad's income, of course it no more behooved him to let a newspaper go bankrupt than to let any other concern go bankrupt—bankruptcies gave the country a black eye. Then, too, it could be pointed out, as going to show that politics wasn't a consideration, that the St. Paul *Globe* was Democratic and the Duluth *Tribune* Republican. Still, if J. Cardigan Clewel, in turning to Jim Hill, counted on finding a new patron in that quarter, you couldn't say that he was chasing a rainbow exactly.

In return he stood ready to do anything he could

do. He was never accused of an overly fastidious disinclination to be useful where it paid him to be so.

4

There was a gap in his calculations somewhere, however. He journeyed down to St. Paul, but he didn't get what he was after. He failed so much as to see Hill though he did his utmost to impress the secretaries and doormen with the importance of his business, and the answer they brought out to him, in effect if not in so many words, was that the big boss wasn't buying up newspapers to-day.

Clewel wended his way back to Gumbo empty of hand and bitter of heart. Nor did he delay long to vent his resentment—in the very next issue of the *Voice* there was a blast which held Jim Hill up to execration as the enemy, if not of mankind universally, at least of such of the race as were so ill-favored as to live in the territory contiguous to his railroad.

Incidentally, while it expressly disavowed any intention to stand up for the speculative interests in Minneapolis and Chicago, the blast contended that the farmers, in blaming the bulls and bears, had been barking up the wrong tree. Bulls and bears were doubtless no better than they should be, but it wasn't they who had the farmers by the throat. The real villain in the play was the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railroad—otherwise, James J. Hill.

Clewel dished up a lot of statistics showing the average difference between the price paid for wheat in the primary markets of Minneapolis and Chicago and the price paid at the trackside in Gumbo. Forget the bulls and bears for a little while and consider only

the legitimate trader who dealt, not in futures and options and margins generally, but in the actual wheat for actual delivery—how did the price he was paying compare with the price the farmer got?

The showing was rather startling. Clewel knew how to make the bad cause appear good and the good cause still better, and he was sparing no pains now. Why, he asked, should wheat be worth fifteen cents a bushel less in Gumbo than in Minneapolis, not two hundred miles away?

He was there to tell the world why. It was because Jim Hill had the farmers where they couldn't get out of paying whatever he chose to ask for his services. When he charged fifteen cents for hauling a bushel of wheat from Gumbo to Minneapolis it didn't mean that the service was worth so much, but rather that Mr. Hill wasn't too scrupulous to resort to the methods of highway robbery.

That was the long and short of it. Hewing to the line without regard to where the chips might fall, Mr. Hill was a highwayman and the farmers were his victims.

A carload of wheat was anywhere from 1,200 to 1,500 bushels, and the charges for hauling it to Minneapolis anywhere from $180 to $225, as Clewel had them figured out. Did anybody think for a moment that the cost of transport to Mr. Hill was more than a tenth part of the smallest of these sums? Anyhow, Clewel didn't. A tenth part to pay the cost—the rest was velvet. Or, more properly, booty. Booty was the right word.

Nor was wheat the whole story of spoliation. In point of fact, farmers were being held up and robbed,

both going and coming. Wheat was the main thing because it was the only thing they had to ship out. But the things they had to ship in paid tribute likewise.

Coal, for instance. In that country every man had to buy coal to cook his food and warm his house, and why was it that coal selling for $2 a ton in Duluth cost a farmer in Gumbo $5 a ton? A tribute of $3 on a ton wasn't quite so steep as a tribute of 15 cents on 60 pounds, but in principle the imposition was just as impudent and iniquitous.

So with lumber, scarcely less a necessity of life. The commonest scoot sheathing that the mills in Anoka sold for $2 a thousand feet wasn't to be had in Gumbo for less than $6 a thousand, and Anoka was nearer than either Minneapolis or Duluth.

Tribute, whatever way you turned. Fifteen cents a bushel on the wheat going out and a dollar a hundredweight on the same wheat coming back in the form of flour. "The primal curse whereby we eat our bread in the sweat of our face is not enough," Clewel declaimed. "Though we are the producers of bread we cannot eat it until we have rendered unto Jim Hill whatever things he has a fancy to consider his."

Groceries, hardware, implements—everything. Whoever opened a can of fruit enriched Jim Hill. Whoever drove a nail enriched Jim Hill. Whoever brought home a broom wherewithal his wife might sweep her hearth—he enriched Jim Hill.

5

The blast made a hit—not a doubt of that. Farmers casting about for somebody to blame for their sorrows needed no more than a hint, and Clewel didn't

stop with hinting. They were not in a mood to inquire very strictly into the justice of the *Voice's* accusations—it suited their temper much better to take offense first and inquire afterwards, if ever.

So that Clewel achieved a measure of revenge and a stroke of business as well. He created the impression that he was standing up for the masses, and nothing could do more to gain him popularity. His paper, indeed, experienced something approaching a boom, so many farmers, pleased with the position he had taken, ordered it sent to them and so many merchants, sensing the enhanced publicity, bought advertising space.

However, his prosperity from these sources wasn't enough to save him. Very likely it couldn't have saved him even though the tide had risen much higher, for he was never the kind to make hay while the sun shone or to lay up goods against the rainy day. He wasted his resources, and soon the rocks were goring him as wofully as ever. No man knew better how to dodge bills, but his dexterity wasn't enough to get them dodged forever and it wasn't many moons after Kindred ceased to dig up until the *Voice* was taken over by the sheriff to be sold under the hammer.

It wasn't likely to fetch much. The item of goodwill counted for practically nothing, and the physical plant wasn't worth a great deal more—a lot of secondhand junk that Clewel had bought for a song, in the first place. The type was worn and broken and so insufficient in quantity that half of it or more had to be used twice in every issue. The press was a poor excuse even when performing at its best, and that wasn't often—every little while the day of publication had to be postponed because the press couldn't be started and

the paper when it came out was hardly more than a smudgy handbill.

Its field was only moderately promising. If with the economic pinch the development of the country hadn't come to a standstill anyhow, the period of mushroom growth was past. Moreover, should the country pick up with the revival of business, there was certain to be another paper started to split the profits.

Who, under the circumstances, was going to bid for the Gumbo *Voice?*

Nobody, so far as the sheriff could foresee when he stood up at the front door of the courthouse to cry the sale. A little group of casual bystanders gathered about, but he personally knew every man there and none of them, as he had every reason to believe, was in the market for a newspaper.

Sven Opsahl was in the group, naturally enough—the *Voice* had employed his best energies these several years and he would wish to know what became of it. The sheriff—not Moberg any more—saw Sven among the bystanders and knew him, but didn't give him a thought. He was scarcely more than a boy and presumably without resources.

But whether or not there was anybody to bid, the sale had been advertised in legal form and the sheriff was required to go through the motions. He opened out a copy of the court's order and read it off in a mumbling, perfunctory fashion. "What am I offered?" he wound up, that being the usual form of words.

No response.

"What am I offered?" the sheriff repeated.

"I bid $500," Sven Opsahl spoke up.

Evidently the sheriff wasn't expecting anything of the sort. He had the order partly folded up and in another moment he would have declared no sale. He eyed Sven doubtfully. Bystanders stared. It was a new experience for the youngster and he flushed consciously.

"I am offered $500," the sheriff called out, after a short pause, with the air of addressing the world at large. "I am offered $500. Is there another bid?"

Silence—no bid.

"Five hundred once—five hundred twice—five hundred three times! Going—going—gone! Sold to Sven Opsahl for $500," the sheriff proclaimed in a loud voice. He had no hammer in fact, but he knocked with his knuckles on the balustrade in front of him by way of marking the exact instant when the sale took effect.

In the sense that the *Voice* was a going concern and that a paper could not have been started in its place, with new equipment, for twice $500—in that sense Sven had got a bargain. Further, he had worked so long with the old traps that he knew how to get the best out of them—they were worth more to him than they would be to anybody else.

The press especially—Sven had made a long and deep study of the press and he had gained something like a mastery of its singularities of temperament.

6

The paper was never more to be what it had been under the hand of its founder. Right away it began to show the effect of thrift where waste had reigned unchecked. Not only was its outlay kept strictly within

its income henceforth, but before long the income began to yield a margin toward the betterments that were so sorely needed. The news in the *Voice,* by dint of diligence such as Clewel hadn't in him, was fresher and more abundant. It mentioned more people by name, and it always got the names right, whereas Clewel had for the most part made hash of them. But in its political policy there was no departure from the course charted by the first pilot of the craft. That is to say, though the peculiar, pungent tang of Clewel's racy style was gone, though Sven's comments had less point and polish to commend them, the *Voice* still steadfastly laid the farmer's wrongs at Jim Hill's door.

Clewel had run the Alliance flag up to his masthead about as soon as there was such a flag and Sven kept it there.

Clewel made a specialty of burning with indignation, and whether or not the trick imposed on anybody else, at least it imposed on the boy. Sven was just at the age to take impressions readily and for Clewel he conceived a respect, not to call it reverence, that blinded him wholly to the dishonesty of the cheap mountebank. His fondest ambition was to be another Clewel, to walk in Clewel's footsteps. What was in fact no more than a thin pretense, with nothing sincere behind it but an unworthy spite—it impressed Sven as the zeal of a real crusader. That first vindictive blast against Hill—the glowing apprentice put it in type and when he was done he knew it by heart, so strongly had its fiery periods laid hold of him. Other similar blasts, too, for Clewel's was no idle pen

—Sven put them in type likewise and knew them by heart and they became his gospel.

If he was born with a sense of humor, Clewel had none, and from him the susceptible youngster learned the fatal knack of taking himself too seriously.

7

Though a first cousin of the lustier Populist party, the Alliance wasn't so much interested in national problems like coinage and the tariff—its proposals had to do rather with reforms that came home directly to the farmer, chief among them the regulation of freight rates by law and the establishment of a fair and uniform system of grading wheat. In Gumbo its counsels were dominated by the Swedes and they didn't altogether swallow the doctrine, so firmly—not to say fiercely—espoused elsewhere, that the free and unlimited coinage of silver would dry every tear. The emotional element in that doctrine was not in keeping with their racial character—they had hard heads and level heads and they entertained misgivings touching free silver and paper money and other planks of the Populist platform. But they were keen enough to have something done about the fifteen cents it cost them to get a bushel of wheat hauled to Minneapolis and about the grades that put money rightfully belonging to the farmers into the pockets of divers sharks.

Indeed, the grades were the greater grievance. Under the free and easy methods of testing, wheat bought as No. 2 in Gumbo might be sold as No. 1 in the Minneapolis market; no doubt it was being so bought and sold right along; and that was the string

which Sven Opsahl chose to harp on more and more.

That the farmers were being bilked in the grading was plain to be seen. That Jim Hill was back of that wrong as much as the other wasn't so easily to be proved. In fact, the best Sven could establish was a certain degree of probability. But he kept hammering away at that, and his hammering was bound to have its effect—if he couldn't bring his public into his own perfect conviction, at least he could stir up a strong prejudice. The elevators—an elevator or two or three at every railroad-station throughout the wheat belt—were nominally the property of concerns variously styled, but was anybody so simple as to suppose that so rich a gold mine hadn't been brought under a virtual monopoly? Of course it was a monopoly, and inasmuch as it couldn't live without the railroad and the railroad was Hill's, what more likely than that the monopoly was Hill's as well?

Clewel had a turn for juggling figures, and so long as the jugglery upheld the good cause, Sven could see nothing blameworthy about it. He developed a similar turn and proved by figures that out of every ten bushels of wheat raised by a farmer in Gumbo County two bushels went to Jim Hill—such a tax, the *Voice* grandiloquently pointed out, as no Cæsar at the height of his power had ever exacted.

Sven became a neat workman with type, and the looks of that particular squib as he set it up may have had something to do with extending its influence beyond the limits of his proper field; anyhow, the tabulation was copied into newspapers as far away as Iowa and Dakota, and even the weekly edition of the Chicago *Times* found room for it.

IX

"That man that hath a tongue, I say, is no man,
If with his tongue he cannot win a woman.

IX

I

BUT though Gumbo became known as a hotbed of Alliance sentiment, it wasn't a unanimous sentiment even there. As the breach widened between the Alliance and the Republican party there were those who, though it should be to espouse a forlorn hope so far as county politics was concerned, chose to remain Republican.

Conspicuously Pick Overturf. Shortly after Sven Opsahl took over the *Voice* Pick, the indifferent farmer and small magistrate, became T. Pickering Overturf, president of the First Bank of Gumbo and by that a rock of conservative reliance, so to speak, in the midst of a restless sea of subversive heresy. He was a stanch Republican and, not only that, he stood up for Jim Hill, as why should he not since they were both moneyed men?

The reversal in Pick's fortunes came about by the sudden and unexpected death of a wealthy cousin intestate and with no nearer heirs. Or, anyhow, hearsay reported the cousin wealthy. Just how much the inheritance amounted to was not generally known and it wasn't likely to be as much as some thought, but it was enough to make the Overturfs easier in their circumstances than they had ever been—if not rich, certainly well to do by the prevailing standards. Pick sold his farm and built the largest and showiest house

in town, finishing it from top to bottom, and opened the bank.

Of the capital stock of $10,000 he owned $6,000, giving him control. Several merchants and others having funds to spare invested from $100 to $500 each, up to a total of $3,000. The remaining $1,000 stood on the books in the name of Morgan Wycherly, who at Overturf's instance was elected cashier.

Wycherly was a new man and very much a stranger, so that people didn't place him at once.

The word dude was just then coming into common currency. Its origins were obscure. Some thought they could trace a relation between it and the proverbially defunct dodo, while others, less fancifully, connected it with the eccentricities affected by Oscar Wilde during his recent tour of the country. But however uncertain its derivation, usage soon gave the term rather a definite meaning.

Right away people in Gumbo wondered if Morgan Wycherly might not be a dude. Shortly, they went farther and decided that he was.

Mostly by reason of his garb. If not otherwise particularly distinguished, his attire certainly marked him out. His collar couldn't be much less than three inches high. His ties, a different tie every day in the week, were shaped like a leg-of-mutton and not much smaller —they filled the whole opening in his vest at the neck and they were made of gorgeously flowered silk in exotic patterns. His hat was of the prevailing derby type, but away lower and flatter than anybody else's, and as if to call attention to its singularity he was forever snatching it off and laying it against his bosom while he bowed to some woman.

He introduced Gumbo to the style of wearing shoes instead of boots when he dressed up. His shoes were always of patent-leather.

Though variously regarded, his assurance was enough to give his manner the color of authenticity and he didn't fail entirely of the respect and esteem properly appertaining to the mold of fashion and the glass of form.

He was a very young man and hearsay didn't credit him with having much money. People learned that he was a recent graduate of a business college in Mankato and they guessed that he had been hired to show Pick Overturf how to run a bank. That the stock which stood in Wycherly's name was in reality Pick's nobody doubted.

The guessing didn't stop there, however. Pick had a daughter old enough to think of marrying. Weese Overturf was bright and fairly good looking, and though she couldn't be accused of holding her head unduly high she had an air that didn't encourage the youth of Gumbo to aspire. Neighbors were convinced that no previous attachment stood in the way—if Wycherly meditated matrimony he had no rivals to fear. He and Weese were seen together more and more. Everything seemed to strengthen the conjecture that wedding-bells would ring shortly.

Wycherly sang in the Presbyterian choir and was especially well thought of by the church element.

Weese hadn't outgrown the trick of singularity—she had to do things her own way or she wouldn't be Weese Overturf. As long as the family were wringing an uncertain living out of the homestead she worked at home and she worked hard. You saw her driving

the plow-team or shocking up wheat behind the reaper and never afraid of making her hands rough with the heavy toil. But when the family's fortunes underwent so marked a change, did she lie back and take life easy? She did not. Instead of that she found her a job, first in a dentist's office and then in a store, and though the wages she earned couldn't be anything very rich she paid her mother $4 every Saturday night for the week's board and lodging and she sent her washing out. What she had left sufficed to dress her, too,—except for trifling presents now and then she wouldn't have anybody helping her.

Independent? As independent, to recall Andy Maguffin's figure of speech, as a hog on ice.

2

Speaking of the Presbyterian church in Gumbo, it likewise felt the effect of Pick Overturf's prosperity. Pick had never taken any particular interest in religion heretofore, but no sooner were the family settled in the new order than he bought a pew and sat in it every Sunday, or nearly every Sunday.

The gesture might or might not signify an intention to cut a dash socially—you were free to draw your own inferences.

Presently Pick was chosen a deacon and it was no secret that he paid handsomely in support of the church. Until then there had been preaching only occasionally, but soon after Pick joined, a regular pastor was called—Dr. Dillon, from Guelph, Ontario.

Dr. Dillon was said to be very learned. You heard that he had written a commentary on the Bible, in a number of volumes—indeed, you might see the vol-

umes in his library, with his name stamped in gilt on the back of each. He was Irish and an Orangeman. From him Gumbo first heard of the A.P.A., that doughty order formed for thwarting the fell designs of the Romish hierarchy. Gumbo stood for the present in need of being educated up to a proper understanding of the importance of the thwarting and Dr. Dillon preached numerous sermons to that end. The only Catholic in the village was Mahoney, the track boss, likewise Irish, but not the warlike type, so far as anybody had discovered. It wasn't easy to get alarmed over the likes of Mahoney.

Morgan Wycherly sang in the choir and Weese Overturf taught a class in the Sunday School. But once more she had to go her own gait, and what she did in that relation was to meet with a dozen or fifteen boys and girls not much younger than herself and talk informally about any subject that happened to come up or to read out of books that she had found interesting.

Once the book was "Robert Elsmere."

The prodigious sensation made by that famous novel was a little past its peak, but orthodox people were still shivering over it and nobody could be more orthodox than Dr. Dillon. It was his duty to keep watch and ward, and when he discovered what Weese was reading to her class he was vastly shocked. But instead of protesting to her directly some instinct of prudence determined him to speak to Pick, and Pick spoke to his daughter. Why, he asked her, was she reading that dangerous book to her young charges?

The upshot was about what you might expect, if you knew Weese. She didn't say much and not in the

least did she seek to justify herself. But she gave up her class from that day and when Dr. Dillon gently remonstrated that the harvest was ready but the laborers were few she answered him by saying that she would rather not profess an interest which she had ceased to feel.

He didn't press the point.

His was the stilted manner that passed for good form and so was his wife's, and the Overturfs had more reasons than their native New England hospitality for being glad to have the Dillons to tea as often as they found it convenient to come. Pick at least was glad, and if Weese wasn't so gushing in her welcome she was gracious enough.

Though Pick's speech had brushed up amazingly since he became a rich man there weren't so many things that he could talk about in select company, but the mighty exploits of Jim Hill were a fair subject of conversation anywhere and the banker never grew tired of enlarging upon them. Once, at tea, he went so far as to declare Hill to be the greatest of Americans, bar none.

"In a broad sense, yes," assented Dr. Dillon. "Pray don't forget that your Mr. Hill is a Canadian by birth."

Weese put in her oar. She had been reading in the newspaper about Mr. Hill. Mr. Hill had recently made a speech at the dedication of a Catholic seminary to which he had given a great sum of money, and in the course of the speech he let fall a remark, no doubt in a playful vein since it elicited laughter, that while he wasn't a Catholic he had lived a good many years in a Catholic family.

"I expect he refers to the fact," Weese explained, innocently, "that Mrs. Hill is a Catholic and their children are being brought up Catholics."

If she wasn't dragging out a skeleton to disturb the feast, anyhow the feast was visibly disturbed. Pick looked altogether uncomfortable.

"If Mr. Hill were to offer to give a sum of money to your church I suppose you would hardly accept it, Dr. Dillon?" Weese ventured, innocently still.

"By all means—of course we should refuse no man's help in the Lord's work," the doctor replied, but he looked uncomfortable, too, and changed the subject.

3

Pick Overturf's father had been an abolitionist before abolition—when to be known as an adherent of that cause brought a man into the shadow of prison walls if not of the noosed rope. An older brother was actually jailed for having attempted to smuggle arms to John Brown's crusaders and when the Civil War broke out Pick, still only a boy, enlisted and saw service. By these influences and incidents he was marked a Republican for life, through thick or thin, in good and evil report. He voted the straight ticket and the platform of the national convention was his political gospel.

In politics, by the way, there lay another bond between him and Dr. Dillon. The doctor was a Canadian but no Tory—indeed, he belonged to the school of Goldwin Smith, who wanted Canada annexed to the United States, and part of the pose was to take a deep interest in the political affairs of the big sister over the border. Though not yet a citizen Dillon

could claim to be a Republican by sympathy. He was proud of having read *Harper's Weekly* almost from the first number back in the fifties and prouder still of having quit it when it went mugwump in 1884.

Grover Cleveland he detested. How *Harper's Weekly* or any other decent journal could stomach Cleveland after the Maria Halpin disclosures was beyond Dr. Dillon's comprehension; and he had an especial bone to pick with Tom Nast, the *Weekly's* famous cartoonist.

"To think," the Doctor exclaimed, with deep feeling, "that Thomas Nast, whose pencil overthrew the Tweed Ring, should prostitute his great gifts to further the fortunes of a scoundrel in politics and a profligate in morals!"

Of course, Pick wasn't pleased with the position the *Voice* was taking and he didn't hesitate to haul Sven Opsahl over the coals. The banker could be canny. You never caught him quarreling with a paying patron of the bank though its patrons were mostly Alliance men, but Sven wasn't forehanded enough to fall into that category and him Pick was free to assail with reproaches.

He was pretty rough-shod about it too. It was the rankest ingratitude, he insisted, for the *Voice* to bark at Jim Hill's heels the way it was barking.

"Where would you and your paper be if it wasn't for what Hill has done to open up the country?" he demanded.

Sven, on his part, was prepared to take a good deal of scolding from that quarter. His usual answer was to ask if Hill hadn't been well paid for what he had done.

Pick contended that such men have a right to fix their own pay. You couldn't hold them to any ordinary scale of wages and it wasn't for any ordinary man to say they were being overpaid.

"If Hill don't like the wages we can afford to pay, let him quit—there'll be somebody else glad to take the job off his hands," Sven countered.

"After he's gone and done what nobody else had the courage and vision to undertake—do you call it fair, now that he has got the great work well started, to expect him to step out and let somebody else reap the reward?"

Yes, Sven called it fair—he thought the greatest good of the greatest number should govern.

That was a form of words often in his mouth and Pick was more and more annoyed by it—so annoyed that at last he was prompted to be very rough-shod indeed.

"The trouble with you, Sven," he snorted, "is that you've got the swelled head!"

He lost his temper, in other words, and Sven as good as pleaded guilty to the charge by losing his.

"Who," he shot right back, "has got the swelled head any worse than you?"

When, that very day, he found in his mail an invitation to a party at the Overturf home, his first impulse was to pay no attention to it—he was too bashful to enjoy parties in any way pretentious, too conscious of his lack of the social graces. But when he turned the printed card over and found that Weese had written a few words on the back urging him to be sure and come, he wondered. Did she know about his spat

with her father earlier in the day and had the spat anything to do with the invitation?

The incident had left a bad taste in his mouth, but somehow its effect was to nerve him. He decided to go to the party.

4

The social graces were Morgan Wycherly's in a very high degree. His gift of song alone was enough to make him an ornament of any affair and he was always so ready to oblige, with *Old Madrid,* or *Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep* or, if the humorous touch was desired, *The Little Peach of the Emerald Hue* or *Is That Mr. Riley They Speak of So Highly?* But his dancing was what made the big hit. He taught the young folks of Gumbo the Varsouvienne.

The Varsouvienne was the newest departure from the traditional square dances. It was very much a round dance—of the waltz family, but with variations that took it a step beyond anything yet. In it the partners remained clasped in each other's arms from first to last and the propriety of embraces of that sort was still very seriously questioned. By comparison the guarded clinches of the old square dances were tame and almost without offense.

There were girls in the village whose mothers wouldn't let them learn to dance the Varsouvienne, but Weese Overturf was not among them. Weese was long out of the habit of asking her mother or her father or anybody else what she might do, and so zealously and with her whole heart did she take up the new dance that she mastered it just with being shown once. Right away she was better at it than Morgan Wycherly. What was more, the way she

danced the Varsouvienne, it didn't seem so bad. She made it look more like the poetry of motion and less like a hugging-match.

The commodious Overturf mansion was the scene of dancing parties every now and then. If Pick objected to them as not being in keeping with his character of deacon in the church, his authority in the family wasn't enough to prevent them and he tolerated the inconsistency—at least he didn't sulk while the festivities were in progress, but mingled in them and upheld the part of host. Not only were there dancing parties, but in the invitations it was Mr. and Mrs. T. Pickering Overturf who desired your presence. Of course, as everybody understood, Weese got up the affairs and her parents were acting under her orders—wisely, no doubt, since it was certain that if she had been forbidden her father's house she would have hired a hall and had her dances anyhow.

Right after Easter invitations went out in the usual form, but even so early people got the impression that the affair was going to be out of the ordinary and having put two and two together nobody doubted that Mr. and Mrs. T. Pickering Overturf meant to take advantage of the occasion to announce the engagement of Weese and Morgan Wycherly. No engagement had been in such wise announced in Gumbo hitherto, but it was so they did it in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and who had a better right to be in the forefront of fashion than the Overturfs?

Anyhow, people were not at fault in their first impression—the affair was indeed out of the ordinary. A band of four pieces was brought up from Fergus to furnish the music, and that alone was enough to give

the party distinction. A feature of the refreshments was a sherbet—the first ever served in Gumbo. Smilax adorned the walls, and smilax was something new too.

As for Weese, her exploits that night cast her previous performances in the shade. Folks didn't know what possessed her to act so, some thinking one thing and some another, but none reaching a wholly satisfactory solution of the mystery.

The amount of it being that she paid very little attention to Morgan Wycherly. She never danced with him once, and if she so much as spoke to him it had to be when nobody was looking, and that couldn't be very often, for a good many sharp eyes did nothing else but watch the pair.

Nor could her open neglect of the man she was expected to marry very well be the effect of an understanding between them, because Wycherly showed plainly that he wasn't pleased—so plainly that he could by no chance be pretending. In fact, he didn't stay through to the end. It wasn't ten o'clock yet when he sought out the nominal head of the house to say good-night.

Pick wasn't looking for anything like that. "Why, boy, we're only just fairly started!" he protested. "You got to sing for us yet."

Wycherly pleaded that he wasn't feeling altogether well—he had slept badly and was knocked out.

"Where's Weese—why isn't she here to see the company off?" Pick complained, making no concealment of his displeasure.

"Oh, don't mind!" Wycherly entreated. "I'll just slip away without disturbing her."

Weese was indeed nowhere in sight, rather unac-

countably, since the festivities were at their height. Pick went looking for her and found her out on the shadowy front porch teaching Sven Opsahl to dance the Varsouvienne. Or, anyway, trying to teach him. The dance went to a tune of its own and inasmuch as the band inside was playing something else at the moment Weese had to hum or whistle as she dragged the awkward Sven through the steps, but though pretty well out of breath she persisted pluckily and was very intent upon the business.

Pick's displeasure was more than ever in evidence.

"Did you know Mr. Wycherly had gone?" he asked severely.

"I saw somebody go just now—was it Mr. Wycherly?" Weese rejoined lightly.

Guests had been prepared to hear it announced that Weese and Wycherly were betrothed and no such announcement was forthcoming. What they heard, not at the party but shortly after, was that Weese intended to enter the State university in Minneapolis, paying her own way.

It wasn't thought, though nobody knew, that Pick had refused to finance the enterprise. Much more likely the girl had chosen to work and earn the needful funds.

Dr. Dillon regarded the State university as a godless institution and told Pick so.

"Education that isn't under religious auspices," the Doctor declared, "is a dangerous thing."

When his objections were repeated to Weese she heard them thoughtfully.

"Isn't it too bad," she said, "that so good a thing

as religion has to stand or fall with such humbugs as Dillon."

5

The titanic Hill was first and foremost a railroad man, but he had a pronounced hobby, if not for farming at least for advising farmers. Every little while you read in the public prints where he had been expressing some opinion about the oldest and most vital of industries, and he couldn't speak too often or too emphatically in commendation of diversified farming.

"In a business whose prosperity depends upon so many elements beyond our control," he contended, "we should have as many irons in the fire as possible. The farmer who depends on a single crop is like the man in the fable who put all his eggs in one basket and so lost everything when the basket was upset. The more crops a farmer raises, the more secure he is of a living."

He did more than preach, too. There came a day when Pick Overturf, acting as a kind of personal agent for Jim Hill, had some news for the farmers of Gumbo County and he sent word to the office of the *Voice*. Would somebody step over to the bank and get an item?

Sven Opsahl stepped over, at once.

"Mr. Hill," Pick made known, blandly, his manner in no wise reminiscent of their spat, "offers to make any farmer a present of a thoroughbred bull or boar, with no conditions whatsoever except that the farmer is to permit his neighbors to have the freest use of the stock for breeding purpose. Mr. Hill believes we are going in too much for wheat and not enough for milk and meat and he makes his offer in order to encourage

us to take up highgrade cattle and swine. Will you so notify the farmers in your paper?"

Sven didn't say whether he would or not. Indeed, he was so altogether at a loss that he didn't open his mouth.

The banker was radiant—evidently his bit of news afforded him the utmost satisfaction.

"Mr. Hill doesn't care," he went on to explain, "whether we breed cattle for meat or for milk, and for that reason he allows the farmer to choose whether he will have a Durham bull or a Holstein, a Jersey or a polled Angus. Same with hogs, though hogs are never bred for anything but meat—the farmer can have a Poland China boar or a Red Duroc or a Berkshire or a Chester—just as he prefers. I'm asking you to say so in the *Voice*—tell the farmers if they're interested to come and see me."

6

Sven went away without promising. Of course, the information was news of the newsiest kind and it was bound to come out whether he printed it or not. But, on the other hand, if his classical learning didn't go so far as to make him acquainted with the warning against the Greeks bearing gifts he had the sense of it by instinct and he was deeply distrustful. More and more he felt that if he should make Hill's offer public he ought at least to accompany it with some comment of an admonitory tenor, recommending his people to be wary about taking too much for granted, since nothing was more certain than that ground seemingly firm to the feet might conceal a pitfall notwithstanding.

He consulted with Moberg. "I don't doubt there's a trap in it," said Sven, "but where?"

Moberg, however, was assailed by no doubts. He heard about the offer and without a moment's hesitation gave it his hearty approval. "For my part I'll risk the trap," he said. "Hill is right about diversified farming. If we keep on raising wheat and nothing but wheat, some day our soil will be run out and the country will be a desert. Hill knows what he's about when he tries to get us interested in livestock. He wants the soil to be built up instead of being run down. He's got a permanent investment and what becomes of it when the soil doesn't produce any more? It's a dead loss. If he gets us interested in livestock he'll have less wheat to haul out, but the difference will be more than made up by the dairy products and fat cattle and hogs. Hogs and cattle go together—the hogs save what the cattle waste. Hill knows that. He's shrewd. We don't have to think he does it because he loves us—he does it for his own good. No need to look for the trap—there is no trap, if you leave it to me."

He warmed. So far from sharing Sven Opsahl's misgivings, the parson was more and more taken by the offer.

"The Swedes are a dairying people," he pointed out. "We know about cows. We know the good Holsteins from Holland and Denmark and we know the good Jerseys from the little island over by the shores of England. My choice is the Jersey. I am going right now and ask Mr. Overturf to have Mr. Hill send me a Jersey bull."

7

Sven printed the bare item in the next week's *Voice*, without comment, and nobody responded to Hill's

overtures more enthusiastically than the Swedes. They were indeed a dairying people and more than glad of so good an opportunity to get back into the kind of farming that they knew best.

A crowd gathered at the station the day the first consignment of bulls was unloaded—Moberg's Jersey, slender and clean of limb as a wild deer, and two Holstein yearlings, beautifully belted, for other parties. The cattle came by express, in crates; the crowd pressed up to get a good look at them as the boards were knocked away, and there was no denying that they were splendid specimens. If Hill had done the handsome thing, furthermore he was doing it handsomely—he was sparing no expense to make his gifts worthy.

Pick Overturf was on hand and at the psychological moment he stood up on a box and swung his hat.

"Three cheers for Jim Hill!" he cried, and led off with a rousing whoop.

The response hung fire for a moment. Acclamations for Jim Hill were not the fashion in Gumbo, and the crowd was more than a little taken aback by the proposal so abruptly put forward. But there before their eyes was the living evidence of Hill's munificence and it seemed no more than right that they make some acknowledgment. Cheers, too, were cheap; and they were presently forthcoming, if not a storm of them, enough at least to keep the banker well in countenance.

Sven Opsahl didn't join in the acclamations. He still distrusted the Greeks bearing gifts. Of course, the mainspring of the radical uprising which he so ardently desired to further was agrarian discontent, and he wouldn't have that discontent allayed until it

should have served to get the farmer's wrongs righted. He didn't want his people to diversify if the effect of diversification was going to be to beguile them into submission where they ought not to submit. If these pretty bulls were in fact a species of bribe, how should they look like munificence to him?

Such the thoughts in his mind, not ordered out to a clean-cut conviction, but conscious enough to make him uneasy and indisposed to join in the cheers.

He kept his thoughts to himself, however. Nobody would have understood them unless Moberg, and he was as tickled with his Jersey calf as a small boy with his first new boots.

The bull's registry papers came along with him, and in them he was designated by a long number and a fancy foreign name. Moberg changed the name, on the spot, to Jim Hill.

By that the parson meant to show great respect. Nothing could be farther from his mind than any sentiment of distrust.

8

The coldest day of record in Minnesota was Christmas, 1879—39 degrees below zero by the official reading and anywhere from 45 to 60 degrees unofficially. A stinging morning. But the coldest winter, taken as a whole, was in 1886.

Gumbo came through it pretty well, though. Feet were frozen in instances and hands and faces as well, and more than once families caught short of supplies by the terrific blizzards were dug out just in the nick of time, but nobody perished and of the harrowing tales of hardship so frequent in the newspapers during the winter none came out of Gumbo. Nowhere in the

valley had it been more the custom to set out trees, and even in so short a time the quickly growing box-elders and cottonwoods were affording some sort of windbreak to temper the icy blasts—there was that circumstance in Gumbo's favor, and beyond a doubt luck played a part, too.

Perhaps the most trying discomfort people there had to endure was the fear of what might happen if the railroad should fail to keep its tracks open. Not far away, to the southward, the Hasting & Dakota—an east and west line exposed to a crosswise sweep of the northerly storms and traversing a rougher country where the cuts were deeper—had finally to be abandoned to the snow and ice, after a fight against them so plucky that the whole nation was absorbed in watching it, and Gumbo people, speculating dismally, shivered more at the thought that it might be their turn next than they shivered with the actual cold.

Except Pick Overturf. He made light of such forebodings. If he wasn't undismayed, at any rate he made a good show of being so.

"Never fear—Jim Hill will keep his tracks open!" he predicted, confidently.

There were no such appliances for bucking the drifts in those days. A modern rotary, with its whirling blades that chew up the toughest crust—it would have simplified the problem to the extent of making it almost no problem at all; but with the crude old plows that went into the drifts like a wedge into wood, packing the snow in front of them and increasing the resistance faster than they overcame it—with only these the problem was fit to appal the stoutest heart. After every blizzard Gumbo people prayed, in their hearts

if not with their lips out loud, that the plow might pound its way through; and when, sometimes not till after many an anxious hour of uncertainty, its coming was heralded by the faint sound of a whistle on the frosty air, they could well-nigh forget the cold, they were so glad.

By the time the outfit reached Gumbo it was a sight to see. There might be as many as half a dozen ponderous engines pushing, and so jacketed were they in snow and ice that their familiar features were just about obliterated. The crews were dressed like Arctic adventurers and the snow cascading back from the plow would have overwhelmed them at their posts only for the heavy canvas curtains hung about the cabs.

Always the engines replenished their supply of water at Gumbo and the crews had to look sharp lest the overflow from the tanks, splashing down and freezing almost instantly, should cement the great wheels to the track and tie up the expedition until they could be chopped loose with axes.

Pick Overturf prophesied truly. Jim Hill kept his tracks open in spite of everything.

The buffalo overcoat saved a lot of suffering that winter—perhaps lives. The thundering herd had been pretty well wiped out already, but the hides for which the bison had been slaughtered were still plentiful. In 1886 you could buy a good buffalo coat, lined with flannel, for $20; and a warmer garment no man ever put on. It was a dressy garment, too, in comparison with the clumsy coonskin that came in afterwards. Moreover the coonskin was never so cheap. The buffalo was the poor man's coat and it protected a multi-

tude against freezing in those early days before people had learned how to live in so cold a country.

Out beyond the Red River, in the Bad Lands of the Dakotas, the renowned Marquis de Mores had his ranch, and when spring came at last his cattle had perished down to a fifth part. Sharing the perils and losses of the romantic marquis, as you read about them, was another—his name, Theodore Roosevelt.

X

"Do you not see how it would serve to have such a body and soul that when you enter the crowd an atmosphere of desire and command enters with you, and every one is impress'd with your Personality?"

X

I

AFTER a while the St. Paul *Globe,* well known to be Jim Hill's property, sent a man out to Gumbo County to learn what the thoroughbred bulls and boars had done and bade fair yet to do for the farmers of the region. Gumbo was chosen as a typical wheat county, its soil neither better nor worse than that of the Red River Valley generally, its people about the usual mixture of foreign and domestic stocks.

The man's name was Sergeant and he wore a tall silk hat with a band about it that came up within an inch of the top. It was the mark of a sporting character, the style having been set, as was thought, by no less exalted a personage than John L. Sullivan. Anyhow, the pictures of the champion of champions, tolerably familiar even in so far a corner of the world, displayed him in that kind of hat.

But though Sergeant had the marks of a sport he soon made it evident that he knew about farming none the less. The way he looked the ground over and pried into things showed him to be, in fact, somewhat of an adept. He wrote well, too, as none could deny after reading his findings in the *Globe.* They painted a glowing picture of the prosperity, present and prospective, of the people of Gumbo County. That Hill's gift of thoroughbred stock had been a godsend was not left to inference—it was asserted in so many words.

"No soil," Sergeant set forth, more learnedly than a hat banded like his would have led you to expect, "can be sowed to wheat year after year without losing its fertility. There is land in Egypt where it is believed wheat has been grown continuously for forty centuries, but that fact only goes to prove the general proposition—in Egypt the Nile by its annual inundations renews the fertility of the soil. Without renewal, either natural or artificial, a very few years in wheat will reduce the best soil to a condition bordering on sterility. It was toward such a condition of exhaustion that the soil of Gumbo County was tending when Mr. Hill took a hand.

"Mr. Hill was not content, either, merely to point the farmers to the more excellent way. He not only pointed them to the more excellent way, but actually led them into it by his generous offer of a thoroughbred bull or boar or both to any of them who would take the animals and keep them and give his neighbors the free use of them. It only remained for the farmers to assemble, at small cost, the scrub dams which, being crossed with the thoroughbred sires, would produce progeny of a higher and higher grade as the years went by until there should be no longer any scrubs in the country.

"Though the process is by no means complete, the results so far are everything that could be asked. Naturally the fruits of so farsighted a policy are not now so apparent as they will be a generation hence, but even after so short a time as has elapsed the conditions prevailing are almost beyond measure better than they were before Mr. Hill lent his wise counsel and generous aid."

Sergeant quoted several farmers in praise of Hill, but there he wasn't so convincing—the language he put in their mouths was too flowery and fulsome to ring true. Moberg especially. Of course Moberg was pleased with his bull and his boar, but Sven Opsahl hadn't read ten lines until he felt well assured that it wasn't the parson talking. Moreover, though he thought he knew without asking that Moberg hadn't slopped over in any such fashion, nevertheless Sven asked, and the parson's demeanor thereupon was confirmation enough. He wouldn't deny the words quoted as his, though they sounded so little like him, but neither would he acknowledge that they were indeed his, even in substance and saying nothing about the form.

"What are you going to do about it?" he demanded uneasily.

"Fudge!" scoffed Sven, making no concealment of his disgust.

Moberg laughed, but very evidently not because he was amused.

2

Sven went back to his office boiling over. He, at least, saw through the trick, and if others failed to see likewise, he was determined that it shouldn't be his fault. What he meant by that was that he was going to tell the world.

Through the Gumbo *Voice?*

It seemed an inadequate channel. He had no apologies to make for the *Voice* with regard to the way it met the demands of its position. Though he claimed no such thing as perfection for it, he would be the last to admit that it didn't fill the bill in every

ordinary sense. But at best it reached a small public. Through it only a very small part of the world could be told.

What he made up his mind to do at length was to write a letter to the St. Paul *Globe,* for publication in its columns. By that he would reach the very people whom Sergeant had reached, and where Sergeant had left a wrong impression Sven counted on making it right.

He apprehended no difficulty. The big dailies often printed letters written in by various persons about a variety of subjects. Sven got the idea that almost anybody might write in about almost anything.

Not unmindful of his limitations, he took a good deal of pains with his letter. He looked up in his big dictionary every word concerning which he had the shadow of a doubt and he worked his sentences over and over till they flowed as he thought good English ought to flow. His name at the end was going to betray his nationality, and still he didn't wish to write like a Swede. He couldn't be too long about it, either, lest Sergeant's story should be forgotten in the meanwhile, and for that a quantity of midnight oil had to be burned. But when he had finished the letter and copied it off in a fair hand Sven was persuaded that it did him no discredit.

He was as well read in English history as he could be and not have access to more books. He knew Macaulay and he knew Hallam. The English people's long struggle for liberty commanded his best respect; he had often drawn inspiration from it and from it he drew inspiration now. So that his letter contained

references to the Barons at Runnymede, the Long Parliament and the Bill of Rights.

It was going pretty far to liken Jim Hill to King John or Charles I, but Sven more than hinted at something of the sort. George III, too,—Patrick Henry's classic defiance was quoted in so many words. It served to round out a period though its relevancy should not be any too clear.

Dwelling upon the grievances of the farmers of Gumbo County and other counties in and out of Minnesota, Sven admitted that there were more thoroughbred bulls and boars in the land than there would be only for Mr. Hill's generosity, but wouldn't it be better, since Mr. Hill was so desirous of benefiting the people along his railroad, if he were to do something about the extortionate freight rates? Or the system of grading wheat which permitted the elevators to pay for No. 2 and get paid at the other end for No. 1?

"There are men," the letter wound up, "who by small favors can be made to forget great injuries, but there are likewise men who can't. Your Mr. Sergeant should have talked with both kinds if he really wished to form a proper estimate of what Mr. Hill is doing for the farmers up here."

Sven sent his letter off by the morning mail and he looked for it in the next day's *Globe*. It wasn't there. Crowded out, perhaps, by a press of advertising—certainly there was more advertising than usual in that issue. But another day's *Globe* came to hand and still the letter wasn't in it, and there was no press of advertising, and two other letters were printed that filled together more than a column.

Prosy screeds, both of them, and not in any way important—they served no purpose but to fill space.

After three days Sven's letter came back to him with these remarks scrawled across it in blue pencil:

"We don't find Runnymede on the map. Haven't you got it mixed up with Koochiching or Yellow Medicine or some other place?

"Do you mean lumber barons or coal barons?

"As to the Bill of Rights, we don't remember owing any such bill and anyhow we never pay till after the first of the month.

"Who is Patrick Henry? Pat Kelly hands out the pie in Minnesota since March 4, 1885."

Somebody's clumsy attempt to be funny, of course, but furthermore an attempt, not so clumsy, to be insulting. Sven very well understood what was the usage with respect to unsolicited communications—where they were not printed they went into the waste-basket. The *Globe* people had taken the trouble and gone to the expense of returning his manuscript for no other purpose than that they might slap him in the face.

The *Globe's* nearest rival in the newspaper field was the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*. Sven fixed up another copy of his letter and sent it to the *Pioneer Press,* confident that it would be welcomed there if for no better reason than because it found fault with something the *Globe* had published. But once more he took too much for granted. He heard nothing from the *Pioneer Press,* and though he searched the paper every day for two weeks he found no letter.

After two weeks he sent a copy to the Minneapolis *Tribune,* but it met with no warmer reception there.

The *Tribune* was likewise a rival of the *Globe's* and it often printed letters; but it never printed Sven's.

So it came out in the *Voice,* after all. It took so much of his none-too-plentiful supply of type that some of the news had to be left out of that issue, and that wasn't exactly keeping faith with his readers; but, having gone so far, Sven couldn't stop without giving his letter publication of some sort. Perhaps, too, it might be reprinted, as others of his writings had been reprinted from time to time, in papers near and far, the Chicago *Weekly Times* as an outside possibility—Sven was so far from leaving any stone unturned that he sent a marked copy of the *Voice* to the *Times.*

No paper reprinted the letter, however, or any part of it. As for any effect in Gumbo, he couldn't detect the faintest ripple. Nobody spoke to him about the letter, either in praise or blame. He couldn't doubt that it had been generally read. He fancied he could detect a difference in the way Moberg acted. But, at most, the difference was very little and nobody else gave a sign.

Sven was embittered. The experience made him feel small and it made Jim Hill look mighty big. Was there no limit to the man's power? Sven was determined to find out, though the power should crush him in the end. He thought of the old adage about the long lane that has no turning and took heart from it—if he died, at least he would die fighting.

3

The ebb and flow of the tide of prosperity couldn't help but affect the agrarian discontent without which the revolution wasn't going to get far—in obedience to

a law grounded in human nature the Farmers' Alliance underwent a slump in these better days. It might be Jim Hill's bounty salving the farmer's sores or it might be some influence less obvious, but anyway there was distinctly less interest than there had been in the farmer's wrongs. The radical sentiment which had brought the Alliance into being touched what might be termed its low-water mark not far from the date of Sven Opsahl's letter.

Such, at least, was the situation in Gumbo County, and when the call went out for a State convention of the Alliance to formulate a platform and lay out a plan of action there was very little response from that part of the valley. Headquarters in St. Paul or Minneapolis or wherever they were, wound the horn for the clans to gather, but clansmen in Gumbo gave scant heed—they were otherwise too busy.

The county was assigned two delegates in the convention, to be chosen in whatever manner might be most convenient, but though a majority of the farmers had not ceased to be members of the Alliance none of them cared enough about the State convention to take any steps. There would have been a complete default of any representation only that Sven Opsahl offered to go as a delegate and pay his own expenses. He consulted with several who had been conspicuous Alliance men in the past and when they had no objection he packed his grip and went.

He took no credentials with him, but there was nobody with authority to give him any beyond an informal consent to his going, and under the circumstances the convention wasn't likely to make any difficulty about receiving him—it wasn't like the con-

ventions in the Kindred-Nelson campaign, when every seat was claimed by two delegates. Neither the lack of credentials nor the further fact that he wasn't a farmer stood in Sven's way.

But he hadn't chosen to spend his time and his money merely in order that his county might not fail of representation. The purpose he expected to further was more personal. He didn't shout it from the housetops or so much as mention it to those members of the Alliance whose consent he obtained, none the less he intended, when the convention should have come to a favoring moment in its proceedings, to stand up and make a speech.

About Jim Hill and his designs upon the liberties of the people.

For Sven it was a departure entirely new. He had never yet spoken or tried to speak in public, and until very recently he hadn't thought of making his influence felt in that way. Only since he failed to get his letter printed except in his own little paper had he been considering the more primitive means of telling the world—by the word of mouth, namely.

Though the notion rather frightened him at first, so that he put it away as an expedient not to be thought of, he did think of it notwithstanding and was more and more fascinated by it. Beyond a doubt there was a very particular glamour to oratory, a dramatic touch and an intimacy of contact such as no printed discourse could afford. Might it not, after all, be his calling?

Almost, at length, he could believe that it might, so did the notion grow on him. He began to see visions and dream dreams. He thought of Burke and the two Pitts and Gladstone—and Bob Ingersoll.

Sven's command of English caused him some misgivings. In his writing he made use of a rugged, forceful vocabulary that answered very well—there he could think first of the Swedish word and then of its English equivalent. But oratory was a horse of another color. Unless he should speak only set speeches and commit them to memory, how should he trust his vocabulary?

Of course no set speech was ever, in the best oratorical sense, a great speech. Witness Dr. Dillon's sermons—prepared beforehand down to the last point of punctuation, and dead as hay.

Moreover, though he should make shift to pick his words effectively and so overcome the difficulty of his vocabulary there was still his foreign accent. He had never been able to shake it off wholly—try as he might, he couldn't be sure that it wouldn't crop out, especially in the very earnest moments when he least wished it to do so. For instance, the speech he had now in contemplation was to be a denunciation of Jim Hill and the chances were that somewhere in the course of it, being never more earnest, Sven would say Yim Hill. If he didn't he would have only his luck to thank. Not by any precaution could he guard altogether against saying Yim Hill and starting a laugh by the slip, when a laugh was the last thing in the world he wanted to start.

In the end he compromised. Though no set speech could be a great speech, in consideration of his accent and everything he decided to write out his maiden effort and to stick, in delivering it, closely to his text. It would suit him better to pour out his message ex-

temporaneously, hot from his heart, but he dared not run the risk.

He composed his speech with the utmost care and, having got it composed, he rehearsed it and rehearsed it in the privacy of his printshop at night, after his neighbors in the nearby places of business had gone home. Bill Erwin, the celebrated criminal lawyer, was by far the most effective speaker he had ever heard, and like Erwin, as nearly as might be, Sven thundered and whispered and crouched and sprang and beat the air with his arms.

When he started for the convention he had three or four copies of the speech stowed in his grip, ready to hand out to the reporters of the big dailies. A letter that came to them through the mail they might ignore; a speech that had been publicly delivered and in its delivery had swayed a multitude—that was something entirely different. Sven could so far put away his misgivings as to count pretty confidently upon swaying the multitude and upon being asked straightway, by reporters, for copies of his speech.

4

The convention was held in Minneapolis, in the chapel of the State university—an unusual and inconvenient place for an assembly of that character. No political convention which had a free choice would foregather at the university, in its distant and not easily reached corner of the town, but the chapel there was to be had without money and without price, and the Alliance, never flush of funds, was poorer than ever that year.

Without money and without price, the only condi-

tion being that the convention should give way, every morning at eleven o'clock, for the brief religious services which the students were required to attend.

The chapel was in the top story of an ancient stone building long since destroyed by fire, and the delegates had to climb three flights of stairs. But sturdy farmers sound in wind and limb didn't mind climbing and in other respects the chapel was well suited to their uses.

They attracted little attention. There were galleries for onlookers, but excepting the students who strayed in now and then with much the air of having nothing else to do, no onlookers put in an appearance. The public at large was unrepresented unless by the reporters, of whom there were several seated at a table up in front. Sven Opsahl, mounting the stairs the first day, overheard a student propose to others of a group that they go up and watch the animals perform—and of course he meant by animals the delegates of the Alliance. In that quarter, at least, the convention wasn't being taken very seriously.

The dominating figure of the gathering, so distinguished indeed as to seem out of place in that company, was Ignatius Donnelly, the Sage of Nininger, renowned in two continents by reason of his brilliant, if ineffectual, endeavor to convince the world that Shakespeare was Bacon. The public interested in such things had not yet ceased to rub its eyes over the Great Cryptogram, Donnelly's astonishing attempt to trace, in the plays themselves, secret writings going to show that they were in reality the works of Bacon.

But no eminence in letters could satisfy the restless ambition of the Sage—his fondest wish was to rank among the politically great of earth, as if no other

kind of greatness was so much worth while. He had already held high office, but he aspired to higher and inasmuch as the old parties had not extended to him the recognition which he deemed his right he was now espousing, with characteristic energy, the cause of the downtrodden farmer.

His light was not a light to be hidden under a bushel. If the students had some reason to think of the delegates to the convention as so many performing animals, Donnelly was the ringmaster. If it should be too much to say that they literally jumped through hoops when he cracked the whip, at any rate the action they took was always and in every respect the action he wanted taken.

5

There was the usual delay at the start and the first day's business was no more than fairly under way when the hour of eleven struck and delegates drew back into the galleries while the students swarmed in and filled the floor. Members of the faculty took seats on the stage and after the singing of a familiar hymn by the choir and congregation the president of the university, a spectacled scholar, read briefly from the Scriptures and offered prayer. There were various announcements concerning the work of the school, and when they had been given out the exercises were at an end.

But before the students could be dismissed unidentified voices raised the cry, "Donnelly! Donnelly!" Other voices took it up at once, and in a moment Donnelly was being called for on every hand, while the acclamations elicited by the mention of his name smote the rafters.

The president came up to the front of the stage.

"Will Mr. Donnelly favor us?" he requested, benignly.

The Sage, well back among the delegates, stood up and was greeted with deafening cheers as he made his way forward and was welcomed by the president with outstretched hand.

Donnelly made a little speech. It was of the order known as felicitous and it took the form of an anecdote. "In a little town not far from where we stand," he related, "a company of barnstorming actors put on a performance of the play of Hamlet. Of the merits of the performance I shall say nothing further than to quote the comments of the local newspaper next day. It named the play and the actors in the several parts and, that done, it went on in these words:

" 'We understand that there is some controversy as to who wrote Hamlet, whether Shakespeare or Bacon. If that is so, we should like to offer a practical suggestion. We suggest that Mr. Shakespeare and Mr. Bacon both be dug up, and whichever of them turned over in his grave last night wrote the play.' "

The speech was greeted with wild whoops of delight from the students; the president and members of the faculty joined heartily in the merriment, and altogether it was Donnelly's moment. But though he made a big hit with everybody else there, he made no hit with Sven Opsahl. Such levity seemed to him entirely out of place and not in keeping, even as a byplay merely, with the grave purposes of the convention. It was a false note. In his estimation it made Donnelly out a kind of clown, and no clowns were wanted in the Alliance. "He's not the Moses to lead us out of the wilderness!" thought Sven.

Nor was his distaste the less when he reflected that Donnelly's sparkling wit wasn't going to make it any easier for a raw Swede boy from the back settlements to stand up and say his say. So reflecting, Sven Opsahl felt a good deal like a tallow dip in the face of the sun.

During the religious exercises he looked out over the body of students to see if Weese Overturf was among them. She was—in a seat not far away, with a pencil thrust in her hair and a heap of books in her lap. She had been in his mind before—as long ago as when his thunderbolt was in the forging and the thought that she might be at hand when he hurled it had no doubt been an inspiration. But right now he didn't know if he wished her to be at hand or not. It was certain that if the thunderbolt should for any reason fail of its effect she was about the last person in the world whom he would wish to have as a witness to his discomfiture.

Apparently, she didn't see him now. Perhaps she didn't care to see him. Anyway, she drifted out with the others and never once glanced in his direction.

6

Delegates to the convention found accommodations at the various inns and clubs where the students lived and Sven, seeking cheap entertainment, was directed to a resort known as Bed Rock, where the landlady was glad to feed him and lodge him for a dollar a day. Her regular rates for permanent guests were still lower—only $4 a week. If life didn't mean so much in those primitive days, on the other hand it cost less.

At Bed Rock Sven fell in with Hodgson, likewise

attracted by the inexpensive fare. He, too, was a figure in the convention—though neither so distinguished nor so dominating, he played an important part. No older than Donnelly, perhaps, the years had not been so kind to Hodgson—his hair was gray and his face showed the traces of hard knocks. But withal there was a cheerful serenity about him that testified to a strong soul and he made his influence felt, though he went so quietly about it. If the farmers stood somewhat in awe of Donnelly, a stranger among them whose sincerity was at best open to doubt, they swore by Hodgson, for he was their own kind and knew their troubles because they were his own troubles as well. Shrewd, clear of vision and level of head, thoroughly in earnest and thoroughly honest, he commanded more confidence than any man in the convention.

He was kind, too, though none of the gushing sort, and he went out of his way to cultivate Sven Opsahl's acquaintance over Bed Rock's corned beef and cabbage. A Yankee himself and residing in a section of the state where foreigners were not so numerous, Hodgson was desirous of learning more about the Swedes at first hand. He plied Sven with questions, always in a sympathetic vein, and he seemed greatly pleased with the answers he got.

Sven, on his part, was prompted to be confidential, and before the first dinner was over he had told Hodgson about the speech which he intended to make.

Hodgson, by the way, was not given to oratory. Though his voice was heard as often as any, his words were as few as would meet the demands of the occasion and they were spoken quietly and without adornment.

But he was interested, none the less. He asked if Sven would mind letting him see the speech, since he had it written out. Sven didn't mind. He blushed awkwardly, but in his heart he was glad.

Hodgson read the speech through every word.

"Of course I can't talk like Donnelly," Sven confessed, with a gulp.

Hodgson laughed. "I expect you mean what you say, and no man need be ashamed to speak up if he means what he says."

"You think—you would advise me to speak?" Sven faltered.

"Why not? We need honest men and honest advice. If you are honest you've no reason to hang your head before anybody."

Sven couldn't help but be encouraged and still he was in something of a quandary. "I'm afraid I won't get the chance. I can't get up and start talking just any time, can I? It seems to me there ought to be something leading up to it."

"There'll likely be a good opening when the resolutions are reported," Hodgson advised him. "I don't doubt the resolutions will be very much in the spirit of your speech, and when they are reported and the chairman asks if there is any debate, that will be your chance—stand up and let them have it right from the shoulder."

Sven went back to the chapel after dinner a good deal lifted up. He had got the impression that Hodgson agreed with him in not thinking so very highly of Donnelly. That might be common jealousy or it might be uncommon vision, but either way it made Sven dis-

tinctly less afraid of being snuffed out by the brighter light.

Indeed, his confidence was so far revived that he hoped Weese Overturf might be present when the resolutions were reported.

7

Donnelly was chairman of the committee on resolutions and he framed the committee's report—framed it and read it to the convention. It was toward the end of the day and the westering sun slanted its rays through the tall windows of the chapel and lit up the scene in a particularly impressive way. If Donnelly had chosen his time he chose well—the stage couldn't have been set to a better advantage.

He was not cast in a heroic mold. Short and pudgy, to tell the truth. In actual inches he stood below most of the men near him that day. Yet he seemed to tower over them all. Scarcely had he lifted his voice, and it was a voice in no respect extraordinary, than you sensed the magic of the man, the might of his mind. You forgot to doubt his sincerity. You were straightway under a spell that left no room in your mind for disparagement.

The report couldn't very well be anything but a recital of the farmer's wrongs as he saw them and a denunciation of his enemies as he identified these. To that extent there was nothing unusual or unexpected in the resolutions. Nevertheless they were in striking contrast with the pronouncements put forth by most political conventions. The turgid bombast so familiar in such documents as to be well-nigh an established form was wholly lacking here. The language was

simple, sinewy and forthright. Not a word was wasted and none failed of its effect. The plainest farmer there understood.

When Donnelly had finished the reading he laid the sheets of paper down and offered the motion needful in order to bring the resolutions properly before the house. He might have let somebody else do that, but when he didn't he was within the proprieties.

There had been no sound not of his own making since he began to read, and when he fell silent the hush was almost painful. It lasted but a moment, however. Donnelly waited for no second to his motion, though the strict parliamentary usage required him to do so. Waiting for no second, he took a step or two forward and launched into a speech which many have deemed the most extraordinary that ever fell from his gifted lips.

It was invective from start to finish. Not a kind word in it. Bitter, biting, pitiless.

Against Jim Hill.

Donnelly's denunciations were gigantic, like boulders torn up and hurled by the hand of a demigod—gigantic and appalling, so that his hearers hung upon his words with something of a frightened air. No doubt he was giving them back their own thoughts, but thoughts so transformed by the tremendous imagery in which he clothed them as to be almost beyond recognition. Hatred—no other name would so well describe the sentiment which these farmers of the Alliance held toward Hill, but it was an impersonal hatred, so that Donnelly's ferocity shocked them. Almost you might say that they drew back, as if he had led them up to the brink of a yawning pit.

Especially disturbing in that sense was the figure wherein the Sage likened Hill to some huge and hideous monster of the deep, reaching out with its slimy arms to lay hold of its victims before they are aware and draw them to it and envelop them in its folds and strangle them and devour them. You saw the darkling caverns where the monster lurked, its tentacles now groping, now darting swift as lightning, now winding about their prey. Many tentacles working out in every direction, drawing whatever they touched to the monster's maw—it was a picture fit to make you shudder.

But if there was a bardlike intensity in the delivery of such passages, he could shift on the instant to the calm of conversational commonplace. "When you enter the general offices of the Manitoba Railroad in St. Paul," he said quietly, "you see in a far corner a door painted across with the words, *The President.* If they permit you to pass through into the holy of holies, and I will say that many a less important personage is more hedged about with guards, you discover, sitting at a common kind of a table and without a touch of magnificence anywhere about, a common kind of a man. In stature he is low and though of stocky build his weight is under rather than over the average. His face, in repose, is dull. Long hair mingling with a bushy beard gives him an untidy aspect—a point of singularity rather than distinction. Nevertheless, from that unpretentious room as from some murky cavern under the sea and from that seemingly undistinguished man as from the monster of the deep, there reach out the tentacles—unseen but only the more

deadly dangerous for that—which fasten upon you and me to our undoing.

"We fondly fancy that we live under a democratic government where men are equal before the law and no man has more political power than another except as it is delegated to him by the voice of the people. We are mistaken. We think we elect, from time to time, our congressmen, our members of the legislature and other public servants. Once more we are mistaken. Our government here in Minnesota is an autocracy and Jim Hill is the autocrat. He it is who chooses our public servants. He determines who shall sit among the elders of the land and make the laws, what laws shall be made—everything, in short. He determines everything—his will is law.

"Wherefore? Why should he care who makes the laws or what laws are made? I answer in a word—tribute. He wishes to take his toll from us and he wishes not to be molested in so doing. We pay taxes to maintain a form of government which only plays at governing while our real master exacts tenfold more in payment for what he is pleased to term, with a species of ghastly humor, his services.

"Like the monster under the sea he works in the dark. He is dealing with a people who can be robbed only as they are first deluded. Hence the various adroit arts by means of which he seeks to lull his victims, as it were, to sleep."

Just at the last Donnelly reverted to his more vehement manner.

"Farmers of Minnesota," he cried out, with a great voice, "will you sell your birthright for a mess of pot-

tage? Will you be beguiled by the gift of a few black pigs and hornless bulls?"

8

Donnelly was done and Sven Opsahl gasped for breath. He heard somebody move an adjournment for the day, and directly he was in the midst of a crowd of delegates jostling out.

Near the door a hand touched his shoulder and he faced about to find Hodgson right behind him. But he was still too dazed to think of anything to say.

Hodgson's eyes twinkled. "The Sage stole your thunder, eh?" he chuckled.

At least it was a fact that every point which Sven had taken up in his speech Donnelly had likewise taken up in his. If the thunder hadn't been stolen exactly, anyhow there was none of it left unhurled.

Hodgson's eyes were full of laughter. "Even to the pigs and the bulls!"

These, too. With another array of adjectives yet much as Donnelly had brought them into his discourse, Sven had intended to bring them into his.

Still he had nothing to say, and Hodgson turned away. He didn't act in the least sorry and Sven thought it another unkind cut. At the second landing of the long stairs Weese Overturf was waiting—perhaps for him, perhaps for somebody else. But whether or no, she held out her hand.

"Poor Yim!" she sighed.

Mockery, of course, and it nettled Sven. However she meant it, he took it as a fling at his unhappy accent and he thought her not only unkind but unladylike.

He shook hands, but without much spirit, and he was as dumb with Weese as he had been a moment since with Hodgson, though now he wasn't so much dazed as sore.

"Donnelly has got Shakespeare pulverized—our Mr. Hill seems to be next on his list!" Weese laughed.

Sven passed on without a word. He had no call to stand up for Donnelly, but neither did he relish Weese's banter. It was like a snub, the way he left her there, but he was reckless—with his dreams tumbling about his ears and nobody offering him any sympathy, how be otherwise? He caught a glimpse of Weese out of the corner of his eye and it didn't make him feel any better—she seemed not so much offended as amused.

He didn't stay through the convention, but took the next train back to Gumbo. On the way he tore up the copies of his speech and threw them out of the window.

9

For some weeks the *Voice* had been flying at its masthead, as a sort of slogan, these immortal words in black type:

> You can fool some of the people all of the time or all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time.—*Abraham Lincoln.*

Sven hadn't been long back from the convention when the mail brought him a letter postmarked Minneapolis. In it the slogan was cut out and pasted on a sheet of paper, together with another quotation likewise in print:

The men who say a thing can't be done are forever being overtaken and pushed aside by the men who are actually doing it.—*James J. Hill.*

Underneath the two blocks of print somebody had scrawled: "Cheer up!"

There was no signature, but none was needed. The scrawl was beyond a doubt Weese Overturf's.

XI

"Why, who makes much of a miracle?
As for me I know of nothing else but miracles."

XI

I

SVEN OPSAHL came home disgruntled and out of sorts. The way Donnelly had taken the wind out of his sails left him with a sense of having been badly used.

Only by a stretch could he call it stealing his thunder—of course, it wasn't his thunder to the extent that nobody else had a right to make use of it. Moreover, he was in no position to deny that Donnelly had made a vastly better use of it than he could—if he thought of the cause, if it was the good of the Alliance and not his own glory that he sought to further, he should be glad that Donnelly had taken the thunder and hurled it to such telling effect. Glad, and ashamed of his disgruntlement.

But he wasn't. Dazed and dumfounded at first, he scarcely knew what to think, but the more he considered what had befallen him, the less he could dismiss the sense of injury. He wasn't glad and he wasn't ashamed—not in the least.

Such reflections put him in a mood to be particularly stung by Weese Overturf's mockery, for he could make nothing else of it. It enraged him, and in his wrath he vowed that he was done with her. She had made fun of him and while he could do nothing but swallow the affront, he would see that she had no opportunity to repeat it. He would studiously avoid her. If they

should meet by chance, he wouldn't speak to her or, if he spoke, only very briefly and coldly. In short, he would steel his heart against her.

The resolution was easier taken than kept, however. He very soon discovered that he wasn't done with Weese—even though he should shun her and snub her he knew perfectly well that by no such devices was he going to banish her from his life. Though he should run away to the ends of the earth and never more lay eyes on her, she was in his life to stay notwithstanding, and that was perhaps the bitterest drop in the cup he had to drink these days.

2

Gloomy days, but there came to him a ray of comfort in the form of a letter from Hodgson. Hodgson's part in the convention, solid, worthy, sincere, had lifted him to something like the rank of a prophet in that Israel, and a letter from him, saying nothing about its contents, was a compliment.

Nor were the contents other than complimentary.

"I meant to have another quiet talk with you," Hodgson wrote, "but when I got around to look you up you had gone home.

"In a huff? I hope not.

"Don't take Donnelly too seriously. He is a very able man, but how much he can do for a cause like ours, even though his intentions should be of the best, is problematical. His heart may be in the right place, but his hands are not horny enough. A man who has so obviously lived without working, as the average farmer knows work, cannot speak for men whose backs are bent with toil, though he has the tongue of an

angel. In my opinion his espousal of the farmer's cause is chiefly important as a portent. Donnelly is an old hand at the political game and he wouldn't be enlisting under our banner if he wasn't pretty well convinced that we are going to win.

"I have a proposal to make to you—why not ask your neighbors in Gumbo County to elect you their member of the Legislature?

"If I am not much mistaken there will be great doings in St. Paul next winter.

"First, if not foremost, there will be the business of electing a United States Senator and it is no secret that a United States Senator is what Donnelly most wishes to be. Once upon a time, while yet he was rated a Republican, he came within one vote of gaining the toga. Of course, after the way he has wandered from the faith, he has nothing further to expect from the Republicans as a party, but he has some reason to count on the support of the Alliance. Just what the Alliance can do for him remains to be seen, but it is practically certain that his hat will be in the ring when the fight starts.

"You will readily understand, after the talk we had, that I am not urging you to go to the Legislature in order to vote for Donnelly, yet I am free to confess that you might do worse. I am not against him. I can't see that it makes any great difference to us, for the present, who is United States Senator—I can think of scarcely another office which is of less actual importance to the farmers of the Northwest. On the other hand, it might be a good stroke of advertising if Minnesota, for a change, should send to the American House of Lords a man who at least knows beans when

the bag is open. Personally, I think I should enjoy seeing Donnelly in that exalted company. Certainly no man knows better how to stir up the animals. I am told that his speech excoriating the Washburn family when he and so many of them were members of the Lower House of Congress is still quoted as a classic.

"But whoever is elected Senator there will come before the Legislature other business which I regard as being of the utmost consequence, and that is why I wish to see good men on guard. Nothing is farther from my intention than to flatter you, but at the same time I do not hesitate to say that you have rather uncommon elements of strength as a political possibility.

"I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but I plainly foresee a day when a man will have to be either a Swede or a Republican in order to gain high office in Minnesota. The Swedes are by habit and temper a loyal race and inasmuch as most of them have chosen to be Republicans our only show to win them away from that allegiance is to put up outstanding candidates of their own nationality.

"For that reason, if no other, the political hope of the Alliance is in young and able Swedes like you. We should have a number of them in training.

"I use the word 'able' advisedly and once more without meaning to flatter you. You have a level head, as young men go. You have made a study of public affairs beyond the majority of your countrymen. You are honest, within the limitations of your prejudices, and no more than that can be asked of any man. You have a personality which need not stand in your way. In short, you possess, or can develop, the qualities of

a leader, and leaders are what we need. I don't know how many members of the next Legislature the Alliance will elect, but there will be a number and unless they are wisely led there might as well be none.

"If you consent to run I promise to come out there and make a few speeches for you."

3

The thought of holding public office wasn't new to Sven—neither new nor offensive, for he had harbored political ambitions. But what did more to determine him now was his mood—it was such that he needed very little urging and he made up his mind on the spot. Particularly as he had no reason to expect that he could be elected without a fight. That was what tempted him—his mood at the moment made the prospect of a fight altogether attractive.

Another thing—only a day or two after Hodgson's letter came to hand, Sven heard that Pick Overturf was going to be the Republican candidate in Gumbo County. Pick and Sven were still on fairly good terms personally, though there was more and more the touch of condescension in the banker's courtesy. Morgan Wycherly had left town, but if Pick's domestic projects had thereby gone the way familiar to mice and men he wasn't blaming the editor of the *Voice,* and as recently as a month earlier the editor on his part would have hesitated to enter into a contest with a neighbor toward whom he had as yet no serious reason to entertain any but neighborly feelings.

But in that month his outlook had undergone a change. To say nothing of worthier considerations, the memory of Weese Overturf's flippant banter, the

taunting look of amusement in her face when he turned away from her without speaking—these so affected him that he was more than ever glad to get into the fight after he learned that Weese's father was to be his adversary. Nothing could suit his temper better. He would show Weese's father and he would show Weese that he wasn't so much of a joke as they liked to think him. Though Pick should win at last and be elected, he should have a run for his money.

Overturf had no rival in his own party. In every precinct his delegates were chosen unanimously and in the convention the formality of a ballot was dispensed with—he got his nomination by acclamation. In other words, he had the whole Republican strength behind him.

But he had more. He was personally popular. Whoever dealt with him couldn't help but like him. Though farmers should be Alliance men they had found Pick trustworthy and they trusted him, and though they should be Swedes and by that, as Hodgson had pointed out in his letter, prejudiced in favor of a candidate of their own race, here, as Sven only too soon found out, was an exception.

The slump in the agrarian discontent played into Pick's hand, too. There was still the form of an Alliance party in Gumbo County, but it wasn't making much noise. Moberg and Ingbretson and others equally influential were frankly not in favor of Sven Opsahl's candidacy. They told him to his face that he was too young and inexperienced to aspire to so important an office, but even though they had deemed him in every respect fit these men didn't see why the Alliance should put up anybody against Overturf.

Overturf was good enough for them. They expected to vote for him.

But the darker the outlook, the less was Sven minded to back down. When leaders of the Alliance as good as refused to call a convention to nominate a candidate, he announced that he would run as an independent without party affiliation of any sort. He could do that. Nowadays, since the adoption of the official ballot with its multitude of legal restrictions, it wouldn't be so easy, but so long ago Sven had only to get tickets printed with his name on them or stickers by means of which his name could be pasted over Pick Overturf's on the regular Republican ticket. Indeed, even so little formality was not necessary—a voter might scribble his choice on any scrap of paper that came to hand and it was a valid ballot so long as he made his intentions clear.

Pick and Sven were the only entries in that particular race. It wasn't doubted that Pick would win in a walk.

4

Indeed, the Swede boy would be lucky to suffer nothing more serious than the defeat of his political ambitions. During that campaign Gumbo's second newspaper was launched and by it Sven Opsahl's very bread and butter were threatened.

The new paper was called the *Beacon,* and while Overturf's hand didn't appear openly, he was known to be financing the venture.

The editor was Luth Rand. He was a Swede and he came to Gumbo uncommonly well recommended. He was not of the peasant strain, but though that fact set him in a sense apart it didn't hurt his standing any.

His ancestry, if not exactly aristocratic, was such as to command the respect of a people not yet imbued, except very superficially, with the spirit of democracy. He was highly educated, moreover, having studied at Upsala and Bonn, and he had about him the cultivated air of a man of the world. The editor of the *Beacon* was rather a glittering personality, so that the Mobergs and Ingbretsons were flattered when he let them take him up and make a lion of him.

So glittering that Sven Opsahl was cast in the shade. People were bound to make comparisons and he couldn't help but suffer.

Rand had been connected with the *Tribune* in Minneapolis and he had caught something of the metropolitan fashion of doing things. From the first the *Beacon* was a much more pretentious sheet than the *Voice* had ever been. Whereas the *Voice* betrayed its poverty in every detail, the *Beacon* came out in a dress that betokened no lack of means. It wasn't afraid to spend money. Witness the cartoon it printed every week. Only a very few country newspapers in Minnesota went to that expense, and Rand's stroke of enterprise, if only because it meant a feather in Gumbo's cap, scored a hit.

The cartoons were absurdly crude. The processes which fill the periodical press of to-day with good pictures were then in their infancy or not yet invented. A metal plate was smeared with a preparation of chalk, into the surface so formed the artist etched his lines with a steel point and that was the matrix from which the cut was cast directly. The results were altogether atrocious, but they passed in an age which knew nothing better.

Cartooning, too, was a new trade and the artistry was about as crude as the process of reproduction. Perhaps the most effective of the *Beacon's* series depicted a great vigorous tree and a man perched far out on a limb with a saw in his hand, sawing the limb off at a point between him and the trunk. The tree was labeled General Prosperity, the branch was Minnesota, the man was the Alliance. The saw bore its label as well—Crank Legislation.

No very original idea, nor very clever, and nothing in the execution to brag about. But the point was obvious—none so dull as not to see it at a glance. What gave the cartoon its particular zest, however, was the discovery, or fancied discovery, that the man with the saw looked like Sven Opsahl. For days afterwards Sven encountered snickers and grins whatever way he turned.

Of course the *Beacon* was strictly Republican in its politics. It never tired of extolling the grand old party that had freed the slaves and lifted trade and industry out of the slough of despond by the enactment of a protective tariff. The Republican party, you learned from a perusal of its columns, was the party of progress, but likewise it was the party of safety and sanity. It was the farmer's party, the working-man's party, the party alike of the rich and the poor, of the weak and the strong. It was quick to espouse any new cause that deserved to be espoused but it never ran after strange gods to the bewilderment and confusion of honest men.

Equally, of course, under the circumstances, the *Beacon* had no purpose more cherished than that of securing the election of Pickering Overturf to the

Legislature. To the furtherance of that purpose it bent its best energies. It had much to say about the importance of the Legislature—where an act of Congress touched its tens an act of the Legislature touched its hundreds and even thousands. In these days when heresy was so much abroad in the land a Legislature made up of sensible, sincere and capable members was about the greatest boon the commonwealth could ask of politics. Every man of that stamp sent to St. Paul next winter meant another rock in the wall that guarded our cherished institutions against the inroads of anarchy.

Rand wielded an eloquent pen and he laid it under no restraint in his advocacy. He found many reasons why Overturf should be chosen and he presented them persuasively.

5

Sven, meanwhile, had to toot his own horn—if he didn't his horn would remain untooted. In point of fact, his mood being what it was, he hadn't many qualms—early in the campaign he threw modesty to the winds and week after week the *Voice* was filled with praises of himself—written, as everybody knew, by himself.

Praise of himself and disparagement of his adversary, and by neither did he help his cause much. But of the two the disparagement did him the less credit, for if he was under a certain necessity to commend himself there was no such reason why he should go out of his way to vilify Pick Overturf. In nothing did Sven use such poor judgment. That Pick was spending a good deal of money anybody could see, but when

Sven accused him of corrupt practises he alleged what few in that community could be made to believe.

Even less believed was the assertion that if the banker went to St. Paul he would work there with sinister influences bent on plunder. Sven could identify no such interests, he could specify no plunder, and if his assertion wasn't the merest guesswork, anyhow Gumbo so regarded it. So foolish a charge fell flat by the weight of its inherent improbability. Not only that; it in a manner recoiled and its effect at last was still further to impair Sven's chances.

If there was some merit in his plea that unless the fashion of spending so much money in elections should be emphatically rebuked the result would be that no poor man, however fit, could aspire to public office—if there was merit in that plea, Sven spoiled it by his savagely spiteful manner of presenting it. He was abusive. He flung personal epithets recklessly about. He twitted Pick with being a failure in his own right—a mere nobody only for his lucky inheritance. Had the boy actually gone out of his wits?

The conduct of the *Beacon* was in marked contrast. It mentioned Sven often and never otherwise than kindly. Even it went so far as to aver that it had nothing against him but his youth and inexperience, both faults which time was sure to cure. As for the charges which he brought against Pick Overturf, the *Beacon* passed them by in silence.

It could have chosen no shrewder course. There was no need to deny what nobody believed, and, what was more, it wounded Sven's vanity to be in such wise ignored. So long as the *Beacon's* silence served to spur him to fresh onslaughts it was good strategy, for

the savager the onslaughts the more he accomplished toward his own undoing.

The nominations were in August and Sven's fortunes steadily waned till about the first of October. By that time his most loyal adherents had given him up for lost—in the words of the day, it was all over but the shouting.

6

The last week in September Pick Overturf got up, at his own cost and in compliment to his neighbors, what he called a Harvest Home Festival, and there were big doings in Gumbo that day. Farmers had the season's work well in hand and they came flocking from every direction, it being understood that anybody in the county might consider himself Pick's neighbor. The town had never seen so gay a crowd and few crowds larger.

Overturf's original intention had been to serve a barbecued ox, and he would have done so only that he couldn't find a cook brave enough to tackle the job. The ox had to be given up and oysters took its place as the main reliance in the way of refreshment and good cheer. Oyster stew for everybody and his wife and babies, and as many helpings as they cared to come back and get. For drink there was lemonade by the tubful, free as water. A carnival company, especially hired for the occasion, furnished entertainment with a variety of circus acts, likewise free. The band played and paraded, their music a joy to the ear and their flashing uniforms to the eye. A program of sports open to any who chose to enter was productive of hilarity and yet more hilarity. Farmers wrestled and ran races and lifted great weights while onlookers

laughed their heads off—in short, joy reigned everywhere unconfined.

There wasn't a hint of politics from first to last and though it was known to be Pick's treat he kept pretty well in the background and took to himself less glory than rightly belonged to him. Only once, indeed, did he assume anything like a conspicuous part. The great doings were in the open street; Sven Opsahl going to and from his office had to make his way through the thickest of the throng; and Pick, spying him out, ran after him and pounced upon him and dragged him, almost by main strength, up to the temporary platform where some acrobats were performing. The acrobats were good, too, and onlookers were gazing up at them with open mouths, but they ceased to be of interest from the moment Pick and Sven showed their faces. These two citizens, more in the public eye than any others then, were greeted with a universal outburst of applause.

However, it couldn't be doubted that the cheers were mostly for Overturf. He was doing a handsome, generous thing, and his neighbors so esteemed it, the more as Sven, taken altogether off his guard and not knowing what to think or how to act, made no very brave spectacle by comparison. He broke away as soon as he could and faded out of sight. There was no reason to suspect that the incident had been contrived, but if it had been contrived it couldn't have done more to boost Pick's popularity or to depress Sven's.

Weese Overturf had been at home during most of the summer vacation, and she stayed over until after the festival. Sven caught a glimpse or two of her that

day, but the glimpses had no such effect upon him as to make him wish for a nearer contact. She was radiant with a radiance that hurt him, much as a studied affront might, though he hadn't the faintest shadow of a right to expect her to be otherwise. If she wasn't enjoying life hugely and without a drawback, then the signs went for nothing.

Why should he think of her when so evidently she wasn't thinking of him? He didn't know. Nevertheless, the thought of her was by no means to be put away. Only for that the gloom might have been easier to bear.

7

In the front door of his office he had cut a slit wide enough to admit a slip of paper; behind the slit he had nailed up a box; and there, at his cordial and oft-repeated invitation, villagers and others were used to drop their items of news—scraps of neighborhood information which though of trifling import are what do more than anything else to get a country journal liked in the households where it is read week by week. Sven Opsahl had his public pretty well trained in that respect. It was a rare day when he didn't find half a dozen to a dozen items in his box.

The next morning after the festival, though his heart was far from light and he went about his accustomed duties perfunctorily, he opened the box as usual and it was almost empty. That might mean no more than that people had been too much occupied with the big doings of the previous day or it might mean that his public had begun to forget him. He wondered, dismally enough, which.

Only two items of news and another scrap of paper.

It was nothing unprecedented to find various odds and ends in the box that didn't belong there, deposited for the most part by prankish boys. But the scrap of paper that wasn't an item—a bare first glance discovered that about it which betokened it neither an odd nor an end. Instead of throwing it away as soon as he saw it wasn't news, Sven spread it open on the desk and examined it more particularly.

It was written over, in a coarse, pothook hand, manifestly disguised, with these words:

"Ask him if, as a Member of the Legislature, he will vote to vacate the forfeiture of the B. & G. M. land grant."

Truly a strange message, but stranger even than its contents was the way it connected itself in his mind, almost on the instant, with Weese Overturf. Less and less, as he stared down at the scrap of paper spread out before him, could he shake off the feeling that Weese had written the pothook characters.

It wasn't a grateful feeling. If the message was Weese's work, he couldn't imagine what purpose she might have unless to play some trick on him, to lead him off on some false scent that would end with making a fool of him. That she would delight in seeing him humiliated he couldn't doubt, and if she wasn't trying to draw him into some sort of trap now, he didn't know what to make of it.

8

But though his instincts warned him to be on his guard, he couldn't altogether stifle his curiosity. He speculated about the letters B. &. G. M. They might be the initials of a railroad—indeed, the mention, in

connection with them, of a land grant made it seem certain that they were the initials of a railroad. Either that or fiction outright. He had never heard of such a railroad in Minnesota. There was a cheap advertising map of the State hung up by his desk, and he went over it minutely, but nowhere could he find a B. & G. M. Fiction most likely.

Still his curiosity grew upon him. If there was, or had been, a land grant of that description, there ought to be a record of it somewhere. If the grant affected lands in Minnesota, somebody in St. Paul ought to know about it. Sven's curiosity wasn't so strong as to overcome the distrust that scented a trap, and he didn't make up his mind until it seemed to him that he had thought of everything, but in the end he wrote a letter to the commissioner of public lands in St. Paul, asking for information. Any citizen had a right to know whatever was in the public records, and it was no shame to be asking information concerning them.

Was there, or had there ever been, in Minnesota, a land grant known, officially or otherwise, as the B. & G. M.? If so had the grant been forfeited? If the grant had been forfeited, did it lie within the power of the Legislature to vacate the forfeiture?

The commissioner answered promptly. "You probably refer," he wrote, "to the grant in aid of the Bemidji & Grand Marais Railroad."

His letter wasn't long, but there was enough of it to give an entirely new significance to the scrap of paper that had been so mysteriously thrust in through Sven Opsahl's front door. The message had not dealt in fiction. There had been a grant. Moreover, it had been forfeited. Moreover, the forfeiture might be

vacated by an act of the Legislature. "Inasmuch as it voted the grant in the first place," the commissioner stated, "the Legislature undoubtedly has the power to set aside or vacate the forfeiture. Such vacation would amount to no more or less than a new grant."

To Sven's mind, at least, these disclosures were proof positive that Weese Overturf hadn't had anything to do with the scrap of paper. He was as thoroughly convinced as ever that she could have no purpose but to make a fool of him, and, such being her disposition, there was no reason why she should have put him in the way of finding out that which he had found out.

On the contrary, there was every reason why she shouldn't.

9

But he didn't spend much time mooning over that point. Regardless of the source whence it came, here was a hint very much worth having, and he acted upon it with as little delay as might be. To cut short the delay he burned more midnight oil.

With the result that the very next issue of the Gumbo *Voice* let drop a bombshell in the enemy's camp. Furthermore, now that he had a real shot in his locker, Sven made it plain that he wasn't as ignorant as he had seemed of the arts of good gunnery. If his failure to score hitherto had been largely due to a lack of poise, there was plenty of it in what the *Voice* had to say in that issue, and in so far as dignity and good temper could strengthen his showing it had the benefit.

Because the name was likely to be as strange to his public as it had been to him he began with a short

history of the Bemidji & Grand Marais. There might be those in Gumbo who had heard of Bemidji, but not many were even so far informed.

Some years since, when the lumbering industry in Minnesota was coming to the peak of its prosperity and discerning men engaged in it had begun to foresee its finish, a company of capitalists had undertaken to build a railroad that should tap and open up vast stretches of timber too far away from the logging streams to be handled in the old way. They called their railroad the Bemidji & Grand Marais, though those points were not necessarily the terminals. The project had everything to commend it and there was no ground for doubting the good faith of the parties behind it.

They asked for a grant of public land in aid of their enterprise and there was nothing out of the way about that. The State was going to benefit by the opening up and development of its resources and by good rights it should pay part of the cost. The company acted in good faith in asking the grant, and the Legislature in voting it acted wisely. So far there was no fault to be found with anybody.

But the undertaking fell through. More detailed surveys demonstrated not only that the cost would be a good deal more than the company's first estimate, but that the timber wasn't worth as much as the early cruisers had reported; the upshot being that no railroad was built, the conditions of the charter were not met, and the grant of land was forfeited.

Very likely the history of the Bemidji & Grand Marais would have ended right there and then, only for the discovery of iron, first in the Vermilion region

and shortly after in the Mesaba range. With that discovery the lands described in the B. & G. M. grant took on, as it were, overnight, a value that verged on the fabulous.

If the grant hadn't been forfeited it would mean untold millions in the pockets of the stockholders of the B. & G. M., their heirs and assigns. Nor was it any serious offset that title under the grant could be perfected only by building the railroad, for now the land was worth enough to build a dozen railroads, let the obstacles be what they might.

Moreover, though the grant had been forfeited, the Legislature had power to vacate the forfeiture—the power, in other words, to put the stockholders of the B. & G. M., their heirs and assigns, back into possession of the land.

Of course (here Sven ceased to write history) it needed no prophet to foretell that the Legislature would be asked to vacate the forfeiture.

By whom asked, specifically?

The *Voice* couldn't pretend to know, but it wasn't afraid to hazard a guess. If you looked in the market quotations which the daily papers printed regularly on their market pages you saw Great Northern Ore listed among the securities bought and sold, and if the *Voice* wasn't badly mistaken, Great Northern Ore was an offshoot and subsidiary of the Great Northern Railway, formed to take over the mineral lands which had come, or might be expected to come, by hook or by crook, into the Great Northern Railway's clutches.

It was so melons grew, to employ the term in the technical sense, as it was understood in Wall Street. The *Voice* was not in a position to reveal the secrets

of the inmost circles, but it felt pretty well convinced that Great Northern Ore was being carefully watched and tended with the idea that it would some day, if all went well, sprout a melon.

Just how big a melon, depended on the course of events, to what extent it could be made to favor. If by any chance it should have come to pass, and many a stranger thing had done just that—if it should have come to pass that Great Northern interests were the heirs and assigns of the Bemidji & Grand Marais company, the melon might, by the vacation of the forfeiture of the old land grant, be made to take on gigantic proportions. Indeed, it might turn out to be about the biggest and juiciest melon ever sliced up.

Thus far the *Voice* named no names—that is, of individuals. It had no need to do so. Everybody knew who was master of the Great Northern in all its ramifications. In that kingdom there was only one king.

No man's name until just at the last. It was thus the *Voice* rounded out its bombshell:

"If Mr. Hill is anxious to have men of his own choice sent to the Legislature, is it any wonder? Not many votes will be needed to pass a bill—a hundred or so in both houses will be enough. Only a hundred votes altogether; a vote from Gumbo County is as good as another, and so farmers and their wives and their babies and their man servants and their maid servants may come to town and eat their fill of oysters without having to pay."

10

No more than that. In perfectly good temper, though it was the first good temper Sven Opsahl had shown in his paper since the nominations.

But if the bombshell and his manner of hurling it were enough to make a sensation, the effect was in no small degree heightened by various signs and portents going to show that the enemy was hard hit, and the first of these was Luth Rand's very abrupt departure from his post and from Gumbo. Between two days, as you might say, he fell out of the picture—anyhow, he took the night train back to Minneapolis and the first the village knew of his going he was gone.

No explanations were forthcoming, but the circumstances pointed to a row of some sort. That Pick Overturf had financed the *Beacon* and paid Rand's wages from the start—so much was well known, and that Rand had been fired because he would not do what Pick wanted done was the commonest conjecture. It was borne out, too, by the banker's demeanor. He acted like a man much disturbed. He forgot to be genial, though geniality was second nature with him. He gave back short and uninforming answers if you asked him about Rand.

But the sign which more than any other testified to Sven's good gunnery was J. Cardigan Clewel, brought back from somewhere to take editorial charge of the *Beacon*. Of course, Pick was paying Clewel's wages, too,—he announced that he had bought the property; but he fooled nobody. Pick paid Clewel's wages, and Clewel was going to earn them by doing the things which Rand had refused to do.

What things they were appeared straightway.

Under Clewel's hand the *Beacon* changed its style entirely. No more moderation in that quarter—instead of saying its say, as heretofore, quietly and without heat, it flew into a great passion. So far from passing over in silence the charges against Pick Overturf, it denounced them as foul and baseless slanders, and its denunciations were more than vehement—they were hysterical.

As for Sven Opsahl, the *Beacon* couldn't mention him henceforth without fairly frothing at the mouth. It called him a doltish, unlettered lout. Did the sober, decent, intelligent people of Gumbo County wish to be represented in the Legislature by a silly boy with no ability beyond the low cunning that made him the useful tool of subversive elements in the work of destroying society—without parts or principles or ordinary good sense?

And so forth and so on. Hearsay repeated sanguinary instructions—Sven was to be skinned alive and his hide hung on the fence, and whether or not Clewel was so instructed the measures he took might well have been actuated by some such purpose. But now it was he who overshot—he protested too much, and the only effect of the *Beacon's* reversal of form was to bring about a reversal of sentiment in the community. The advantage which Rand had gained by his moderation Clewel handed over to Sven; and Sven, having learned his lesson, knew how to make the most of it.

II

But if by these vicissitudes Pick Overturf lost ground, Sven Opsahl had a lot of ground to gain before he could come up with his adversary, and it was

anybody's race right up to the count of the ballots. In fact, the vote narrowly missed being a tie, Sven winning out by the exceedingly slender majority of twenty.

Election night Pick gave it out that he would demand a recount and, if a recount failed to show a different result, that he would contest the seat before the Legislature. It was already known that the Legislature would be strongly Republican, and should Pick lodge a contest, as he threatened, the chances were that a way would be found to seat him.

But by morning he thought better of it. He took none of the steps to which his hasty speech of the night before had committed him. That amounted to a right-about-face, but neighbors could readily account for it. Back in his own proper character, with the heat of battle passed and gone, nothing would be so much like the Pick Overturf they knew as some such act of genial generosity. You couldn't tell them that there might be hidden reasons under the surface.

But whether there were or not, he acquiesced in the verdict of the polls and made it in his way, before the day was many hours old, to shake hands with Sven and wish him good luck.

XII

"Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious Vessels were; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talked at all."

XII

I

THE first business of the Legislature, so strictly required by law that until it had been finished no other could be taken up, was the election of a Senator of the United States, and it was business enough while it lasted. During a fortnight and more the old Merchants Hotel in St. Paul, always a center of political activity, never slept. Night and day politicians big and little thronged its dingy bar, held casual consultations in its devious lobbies or, if they desired more privacy, withdrew to the stuffy little rooms upstairs and consulted there.

A freakish survival, the Merchants, dating back to and preserving something of the flavor of the days when St. Paul was hardly more than a trading post. The antiquated building had only recently been fitted out with steam heat and in nearly every room there was still the hole in the wall where a stovepipe had once passed through. Not that these holes had altogether outlived their usefulness, though, for newspaper men found them convenient to listen at when they were locked out of a conference and there was no other way to overhear the talk.

Sven Opsahl by chance saw newspaper men listening at a stovepipe-hole and was more than a little shocked. He hadn't thought that his brethren of the metropolitan press stooped to such devices in order to get the news.

The old tavern enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the political ferment. Other hotels in the town, any of them more modern, were as good as deserted these days. Politicians as a species had long since got into the habit of putting up at the Merchants, and it was a habit hard to break—the house was a tradition with them. Another thing: if you were a stranger within the gates you hadn't to go hunting for it—you got off the train, turned a corner, and there was the Merchants right in front of you.

Sven Opsahl found cheaper accommodations—the political ferment didn't mean so much to him and when he learned that it would take nearly his whole salary to pay his bill at the Merchants his thrifty instincts recoiled from so lavish an expenditure. But he was much about the hotel during the Senatorial campaign.

Mostly as an onlooker—his affiliations being what they were, he wasn't drawn deeply into the whirl; anyhow, not at once. The Farmers' Alliance mustered only twelve votes on joint ballot and for the present they figured little, if at all, in the combinations that were taking form.

These twelve votes, Sven's among them, were pledged to Donnelly—just as Hodgson had predicted, the Sage had gained the backing of the Alliance in his ambition to sit among the elders in Washington. Largely, perhaps, because it was thought to be a hopeless ambition—if the farmers had stood the ghost of a show of electing their man he might well have been somebody else. However, though they couldn't elect Donnelly by any direct action, in so far as they stood by him and did his bidding they gave him a trading

strength that was not to be despised. In politics hardly anything was likelier to happen than the unexpected, and a situation might arise such that Donnelly would hold the balance of power between two embattled factions who hated him less than they hated each other. In that event he would be the fox in the fable and take the bacon away from both the bear and the lion. No contingency was too remote to be considered by the prudent strategist, and Donnelly exerted his best arts to keep his little band of adherents together. If his card was about as low as any in the deck, no man was more adept than he at making it count in the game.

To none of the band was he more gracious than to the young member from Gumbo County, and if Sven, on his part, retained some personal prejudice against the man who had taken the wind out of his sails aforetime, it soon wore away under the influence of Donnelly's charm, for nobody could be more charming. Something like intimacy sprang up between them.

The Democrats were better off, but not much. They had nineteen votes on joint ballot, a pitiful showing for a party that had once been so powerful. What made them still weaker in the Legislature, they adhered to no settled policy—they had nothing to hold them together but a faint tradition growing ever fainter. There was a chance that they might be persuaded to rally to Donnelly's cause, and the Sage was flirting with them in a guarded way. Nineteen votes were worth having when fewer than a hundred were enough to elect.

The Republicans numbered 161 members, an over-

whelming majority. But they were a house divided and in that circumstance lay Donnelly's opportunity to play the part of the fox in the fable.

Two candidates of the Republican faith wanted to be Senator and they were the lion and the bear, locked in a struggle to the death—anyhow, political death. Each was backed by a strong faction and the fight between them had gone so far as to engender the bitterest animosities. The Senator would be elected by the two houses of the Legislature sitting together—joint ballot, as it was called—but before that the Republican members were to meet in caucus and determine, behind locked doors and as a strictly family affair, which of their two candidates had a majority of the 161 votes, the proposal being that such candidate should thereafter be the unanimous choice of the party and have every member's vote on joint ballot. That was the proposal and it was in accord with the usages long established. But could it be made to stand in the face of so much hard feeling? Would the faction defeated in the caucus so far forget their wounds as to bow to the will of the majority and give their votes to the victorious faction's man?

There was more than a little doubt about it. Indeed, shrewd observers were predicting that the faction which got the worst of it in the caucus would refuse to abide by the result—they would bolt, in other words, and take their fight into the open Legislature.

It would be a great day for the dark horses if anything like that came to pass.

Donnelly wasn't, in the strict sense of the term, a dark horse, for the reason that he had long been avowedly in the running. But there was nobody whose

fortunes a bolt would prosper more. Shrewd observers, mindful of his skill as a tactician, gave him better than a bare chance.

2

The two Republican candidates were Dwight, a certain rich man, and Drew, a certain other rich man, two of a kind as nearly as might be, both captains of industry and more used to overbearing opposition than yielding to it, neither of them much schooled in the gentle art of backing down.

Not a bad kind, understand. Useful citizens and full of works that did them credit. They dealt justly, they loved mercy up to a certain point, and they walked as humbly with their God as most rich men do, both being pew-holders if not members in the church. Their wealth was tainted by no flagrantly dishonest practises—sharp, perhaps, but not flagrantly dishonest. But who, in battle and hard pressed, will neglect the weapons he finds ready at his hand?

Dwight and Drew fought mainly with money. It was their readiest weapon and, however the ethics of business might have stood in their way, nothing in the political precedents forbade them to make the most of it. The result was a riot in its kind.

Every vote counted; no device by which a vote might be gained was neglected, and bribery in some form became the order of the day. The air was thick with the reek of it. The stories you heard were no doubt to some extent fabrications—charges and countercharges which might well owe their origin in large part to the heat of strife. But there couldn't very well be so much smoke without some fire. Though they

should be no more than the pot calling the kettle black, these mutual recriminations at least made it certain that both were badly smirched.

Not a lisp of the damaging talk got into the newspapers, and Sven Opsahl, with the ways of the metropolitan press yet to learn, speculated about that. Some of the newspapers were for Dwight and some of them were for Drew, but as by common consent they never once spoke of the bribery which everybody knew was being practised right and left.

Sven asked Donnelly why.

"Charity," the Sage assured him solemnly, "isn't the only thing that covers a multitude of sins. They can't accuse me of buying votes, but if they could they would. It makes a difference whose ox is gored. You've heard of the foul bird—that tells tales out of school."

Sven wasn't much enlightened at the moment, but he understood more clearly before the winter was over. A typical story and not particularly more damaging than dozens of others was that of a member who sold his vote to Drew for $10,000 and to Dwight for $15,000 and then, with the $25,000 in his pocket, feigned illness the night of the caucus and cast his ballot for neither. Of course, there was no redress against such treachery—the candidates could well afford the loss of the money, and even though they couldn't there was nothing to do but grin and bear it. The member took no pains to deny the story; indeed, he complacently endured to be openly joked about it; yet his political standing seemed in no wise to suffer. His party afterwards elected him to still higher offices; fortune was exceedingly kind to him, and another day

he just missed being chosen United States Senator himself.

Sven Opsahl personally knew of an instance of what amounted to bribery—that is, he got the information directly from the man who figured most prominently in it, a small boss from somewhere in the backwoods with whom Sven scraped acquaintance in a casual way. The boss made no secret of the business that brought him to St. Paul, the amount of it being that he could control the vote of the member of the Legislature from his county—the member was pledged, in consideration of past favors, to vote for whichever of the two Senatorial candidates the boss might designate and the boss was frankly on the ground to sell out to the highest bidder.

He went to Drew's manager first and proposed a trade. "Get me appointed assistant sergeant-at-arms of the house," he offered, "and I'll see that my man votes for Drew in the caucus."

But no such bargain could be struck, for the reason that the place which the boss wanted had already been traded off. Wouldn't some other satisfy him? Doorkeeper, say, or assistant to the postmaster or something like that?

No, the boss didn't fancy any job but that of assistant sergeant-at-arms and if Drew couldn't give it to him as the price of a perfectly good vote in the caucus he guessed he would drop over to Dwight's headquarters and see what was to be had there.

Drew's manager wasn't hired to stand by with his hands folded while anything like that happened. "Look here!" he said. "How much are you expecting the place to be worth to you if you get it?"

The boss thought he ought to clean up $500 at a conservative calculation—an assistant sergeant-at-arms was paid a member's salary and there were chances to pick up as much more on the side.

The manager counted out ten $100 bills and shoved them across the table. "Fix your man to vote for Drew and go back home," he directed, briefly.

The little boss was highly pleased with the deal. He showed Sven the identical ten bills, or what he said were the identical ten bills, as he was leaving to take the train, homeward bound. "Easy money!" he exulted. "You ought to be a Republican—then you could get your feet in the trough, too. But the show ain't over—your vote may be worth something yet."

Sven had a curiosity about the sanctions binding a trade of that character.

"Will your man vote for Drew?" he asked.

The boss grinned.

"He knows I've got everything out of it I can get and that releases him. It wouldn't be the strangest thing in the world if he was to take it into his head to dicker a little on his own hook. I wouldn't blame him any—it ain't every day you get a chance to pick money off the trees."

"But what about your promise—to Drew's manager?"

"Promise!" scoffed the little boss. "What does a promise amount to around here?"

Bribery wasn't the only undue influence brought to bear. In Dwight's headquarters the bathtub was kept filled with bottles of champagne packed in ice, and the costly beverage was free as water. Drink figured as a subsidiary inducement, so to say—it served to put the

wavering members in a mellow mood where more decisive influences could be brought to bear without so much danger of flushing the game. Generally speaking, it was safer to approach a man with a bribe after he had been to some extent robbed of his senses.

Not only was wine pressed into service, but women as well. Agents in Drew's employ enticed an otherwise stubborn Dwight member out to see the sights of the underworld and trapped him into an affair so scandalous that they had only to threaten him with exposure in order to scare him into trembling compliance with their every wish. He, too, was taken suddenly sick just before the caucus, and to give the pretense more the look of reality his wife was wired to come from their distant home and nurse him.

The Dwight people were not fooled, but what could they do? Nothing except to meet trickery with trickery. It was dog eat dog and neither ate less than his share.

3

For obvious reasons no attempt was being made to tamper with the Alliance men or the Democrats—unless there should be a bolt their votes weren't worth buying, and however strong the probabilities might be, no man could know whether or not there would be a bolt until the caucus had met and registered its verdict. But if, the caucus of Republicans having made its choice, the defeated candidate should refuse to abide by the decision, the market price of Alliance men and Democrats was like to take a sudden bulge.

Sven Opsahl wasn't blind. If the cat should jump as it seemed more and more on the point of jumping, the member from Gumbo County was going to be in

a position to sell his vote for enough to make him independently well off. If the dark horse should be as rich as Dwight or Drew and as indisposed to haggle about the cost—$25,000—$50,000—even $50,000 wasn't out of reason.

How about it? Should the opportunity offer, did Sven mean to embrace it?

Not in so many words. A sin in morals and a felony in law—he didn't want to be guilty of anything like that. On the other hand, the cynical indifference to considerations of right and wrong so much the fashion everywhere about him—it couldn't help but have its effect. These men with whom he mingled day by day—they would call him a fool for having any qualms. They would count him lucky to get the chance and foolish not to take advantage of it.

He didn't want to be a fool and he told Donnelly so, saying nothing about any qualms—they were intimate enough for that. What would Donnelly do if he were in Sven's place?

The Sage's answer was quick and unequivocal. "If you don't want to be a fool," he said, "never take a bribe. You'll gain nothing by it if you do."

Sound advice and none the less convincing because it came from a worldly man. Beyond a doubt it helped Sven to get a fresh grip on his principles.

But another day Donnelly rather spoiled the effect. They were speaking, as often, of Jim Hill.

"Does anybody know how Hill stands?" Sven speculated. "I mean has he any preference as between Drew and Dwight?"

Donnelly shrugged his plump shoulders. "Tweedledum and Tweedledee," he said. Then he thought a

moment and made the statement: "Mr. Hill would as lief see me elected Senator as anybody."

Sven wasn't prepared for anything like that.

"In spite of the black pigs and hornless bulls?" he protested.

The Sage's blue Irish eyes twinkled and he made a gesture, or a series of gestures, in pantomimic imitation of a blacksmith blowing his bellows.

"Of course," he stipulated, "you and I are not talking for publication."

If it wasn't a confession of insincerity, Sven didn't know what to make of it and it startled him. But it wasn't necessary for him to say anything—Donnelly always did most of the talking in these informal conversations.

He went on now, more soberly: "Hill doesn't take much interest in what the Legislature is about these days. He has other fish to fry and fish with far more of the essential fat of life in them. But he and I understand each other very well and he wouldn't be sorry to see me go to the United States Senate."

Sven reflected how easy it would be to cook Donnelly's goose with the Alliance men just by repeating those words.

The Sage was in the mood to say things that day. He fell into the philosophical vein. Nothing, he maintained, was more firmly established, as a fact of experience, than that crime projected upon a sufficiently large scale ceased by that to be criminal. "Napoleon," he pointed out, "stole crowns and kingdoms right and left and is acclaimed the foremost man of all the world. Why shouldn't Jim Hill, in his way no less a genius, have the benefit of a similar dispen-

sation? We say of some saphead who happens to be born in the purple that he can do no wrong—why deny the exemption to the real kings, the real able men? Why fetter them with the trivial restrictions that are useful only for the control of trivial people?"

That wasn't Alliance sentiment. It wasn't even democracy. But worse than that, it wasn't the doctrine that Donnelly preached in public. It implied a still further avowal of insincerity.

4

Their intimacy, whatever the reason might be, never went so far as to admit Sven to Donnelly's political plots, and as the night of the caucus drew near the Sage had less and less time for anything else. In his modest and inexpensive headquarters many a conference was held that bore on the Senatorial contest, but the member from Gumbo was not bidden to them. He saw very little of his party's candidate toward the last.

It was a good deal easier to distrust Donnelly when you weren't under the direct influence of his personal charm. If Sven had been passed by he refused to be hurt by the slight. Furthermore, he would never cease to be grateful for the turn of events which had brought him in contact with so original and stimulating a mind. But when he considered how far Donnelly's outlook, by his own admissions, fell short of being the Alliance outlook, it didn't seem right that Alliance votes should be instrumental in sending him to Washington. So long as he could not by any chance be elected, a vote for him was merely a vote thrown away—at worst it

did no harm. But if the Sage's plots and plans should so far prevail that a single vote might be enough either to elect him or defeat him—in such a contingency, and it might arise, Sven Opsahl, though in a manner pledged, began to ask himself very seriously how far his pledge was binding.

He thought often of Hodgson—why wasn't Hodgson the Alliance candidate? Why not bring Hodgson out even yet? It oughtn't to be so difficult—a vote cast for him at the psychological moment, with a little management beforehand, might be just enough to start a stampede that nothing could stop. Sven was greatly taken—nothing would suit him better than an upset like that.

But when he consulted with other Alliance members he met with no encouragement. If he had come out from under Donnelly's spell they had not. They had only praise for Hodgson as a man and a citizen and a pillar of strength upholding the cause, but they didn't see how he could be elected Senator. He wasn't the right sort to play the fox and take the bacon from the lion and the bear—Alliance members didn't use the figure of the fable, but they meant no less. Donnelly, on the other hand, they regarded as exactly the man for the part. He was a brilliant man, too, fit to shine in any society, and if he went to the Senate the Alliance would have the credit of having started him on his way.

That settled it. Of course Sven couldn't expect to accomplish much acting alone—the stampede would have to be to some extent cooked up and agreed upon in advance. But none the less his misgivings persisted.

If it should come about that his vote would elect or defeat, he was at length pretty well persuaded that Donnelly would stay at home.

5

The night of the Republican caucus found both factions professing the utmost confidence. The Drew headquarters gave out rosy forecasts and so did the Dwight headquarters. But these proved nothing unless that numbers of votes had been promised to both candidates, and least of all did the prophecies of either serve in any degree to discredit the prophecies of the other. You could claim anything and believe anything. Disinterested onlookers didn't know what to expect. Bets were offered, but mostly in the way of partisan bluster—the fool's argument.

The caucus met in the chamber of the House of Representatives and nobody not a member of the Legislature and a Republican could enter—even the clerks were dispensed with and the galleries were closed. The newspaper men were forbidden with the rest of the world; there were no stovepipe-holes to listen at, and the various avenues of approach were especially guarded against their arts. The best these gentry could do was to concentrate at the headquarters where the managers found a way, by means of special wires, to keep in touch with what was going on up at the capitol.

The candidates were not personally in at the death, neither of them having been in St. Paul for a day or two; but they, too, were no doubt at the end of special wires. So that the secrecy, though such a parade was made of maintaining it, was show more than substance.

Nothing that took place in the caucus was likely to remain long unknown.

The first vote disclosed six votes out of the 161 absent. Some of these might be detained by necessity, some of them certainly were not, but either way they had to be counted out. The houses, officially in session, could compel the attendance of members, by force if need be, but the caucus had to be content with such as chose to come.

The voting was by ballot, each member writing his choice on a slip of paper and depositing it in the teller's hat.

On the first test nine ballots turned up blank—nine members, in other words, were minded to dodge. The ballots which signified a choice numbered 146 and of these each candidate got exactly half—a tie.

The second test developed four blanks while a fifth had the name of Billy Patterson written on it. "Who struck him?" somebody piped up when the result was announced, and the crowd waiting outside couldn't imagine what the roar of laughter was about.

Five out left an even number of valid ballots, and once more the vote was a tie—75 for Drew and 75 for Dwight.

There was more or less wrangling over the order of procedure, wrangling meant delay and the voting went on slowly. It was past midnight when the chairman of the caucus directed members to prepare their ballots for the third test. The lobbies of the house were thronged, so were the headquarters, and the tension was hard to bear.

Would everybody vote next time? If everybody voted, there being an odd number present, a choice

would result unless a dark horse other than Billy Patterson should be trotted out, and that wasn't to be expected so early in the game.

Wrangling and yet more wrangling. Delay until it seemed as if they never would get down to business. It lacked but a few minutes of two o'clock when a bareheaded man burst out of the chamber and in a voice husky with hard usage shouted:

"Drew has 78 votes and is nominated!"

6

There were cheers, but rather forced and faltering, for the tension was relieved only in part. The situation thus brought about had been so far anticipated that everybody knew what it meant without need to stop and study it out, the amount of it being that there was still enough uncertainty to keep the world on its tiptoes. Would the Dwight forces, beaten in the caucus, swallow their medicine and vote for Drew at the joint session of the two houses, or would they take the bits in their teeth and bolt?

The joint session was to be called to order at noon only a few hours hence and in the meanwhile the pot boiled with the utmost violence. Interest centered at the Dwight headquarters—the next move on the chessboard was Dwight's and the world watched breathless to see what it would be.

The world's eyes at the front, so to speak, were the newspaper men—in that character they let nothing get away from them and when they saw Donnelly in person enter in at the door which led to the inmost sanctuary they needed no man to tell them that a bolt was at least being considered. Donnelly was in there negoti-

ating some sort of a trade. Did it mean that the Dwight strength would be thrown to him when the houses assembled?

Chaos reigned and anything might happen. It might turn out, if there should be a bolt, that nobody could muster a majority on joint ballot—a deadlock, in other words, with the Legislature unable to function in any capacity, since it could not acquit itself of its first required duty.

The nights are long in January, so far north as St. Paul, and day was just breaking when Donnelly emerged from the Dwight headquarters and was pounced upon by the newspaper men. A small mob of them besieged the door, lying in wait for him especially—nobody, at the moment, was more in the public eye than the Sage.

It was his fixed habit to deal kindly with the representatives of the press and he made no exception now.

"What's the good word?" somebody in the party sang out, with the easy familiarity that he was ever the last of prominent men to resent.

"Sleep—I can't think of a better word right now!" Donnelly flashed back, cheerily. "Blest be the man who first invented sleep—so said Sancho Panza and so say I!" he quoted, and waved his hand as he pushed past them and away.

Anybody could see that he was tired and jaded, and well he might be, but his characteristic suavity was never more in evidence. Though he waved them off and passed them by without telling them anything of what they would so greatly like to know, there was no hint of defeat in his bearing. On the contrary, they drew the inference that he was pleased with what he

had accomplished and they so reported in the early editions of their papers—the signs as they read them went to show that a bargain had been struck whereby the disgruntled Dwight forces were to rally to Donnelly's standard. Newspaper men even went so far as to define, in a general way, the terms of the deal—conjecturally, but conjecture was ever their trade and they hashed up a plausible argument. Donnelly was to have the Dwight votes on the first ballot or the first two ballots and after that, if he failed of election, he was to swing his strength to some dark horse whom Dwight would designate—so specific were the newspaper men, though guessing merely.

"Anything to beat Drew!" that was to be the battle-cry of the Dwight faction henceforth, if you could believe the early editions. Of course, though the merest guesswork, it was a battle-cry entirely consistent with the known developments. That the Dwight faction would prefer to see Donnelly or anybody else elected rather than Drew was easy to believe.

Few of the general public were so unacquainted with newspaper methods as to take these speculations very seriously, nevertheless the effect was to arouse a lively interest in the joint session about to be held. The joint session might well be productive of the best thrill yet.

7

High noon was the hour set, but there had to be about so much backing and filling and it was nearer one o'clock when the speaker of the house let fall his gavel. After that there was still more backing and filling and not until another half-hour had elapsed did

the sergeant-at-arms fling wide the great doors and sonorously announce the Lieutenant-Governor and the honorable Senate.

The galleries open to the public were long since packed to their utmost capacity, and the aisles below were so thronged with persons not members yet having the privilege of the floor, that the ushers only with difficulty cleared a way through which the Lieutenant-Governor and the honorable Senate might pass to the benches set out for them up in front. The ordinarily dull and deserted halls of legislation had seldom if ever seen such a crush.

The speaker presided and with another tap of his gavel he declared the two houses in joint session, as provided by law, for the purpose of electing a Senator of the United States. "The clerk will call the roll," he directed.

The vote was viva voce, though not by acclamation. Each member recorded his choice by answering, as he heard his own name called, with the name of his candidate.

The roll was made up in alphabetical order. At the top of the list were the Andersons—three of them in a row—Anderson D, Anderson J W, and Anderson M—to distinguish them by their initials. The first two had never been reckoned anything but Drew men and they so voted. No sensation so far.

But Anderson M was a Dwight man and when his name was called a hush fell upon the concourse. Breaths, in instances at least, were held—here was the first test. Sven Opsahl didn't know even yet how he was going to vote, and inasmuch as the response now forthcoming might help him to make up his mind,

nobody listened more intently than the member from Gumbo County.

Anderson took his time. Very likely a little man who enjoyed the unwonted experience of being so conspicuous—at all events, he was in no hurry.

"Anderson M!" the clerk repeated; and the houses were as still as if every breath were being held.

Only a moment longer, however. Anderson M's voice broke the stillness.

"Drew!" he made answer.

The fight was over. Though Anderson's vote didn't necessarily mean that the rest of the Dwight men were going to do likewise, nobody doubted that they were. Nobody was looking for any more sensations after that—the fight was over and Drew was elected.

Sven Opsahl heaved a sigh of relief. He didn't care a snap of his fingers about Drew, yet the certainty of Drew's election let the member from Gumbo County out of a quandary that weighed upon him pretty heavily.

"Opsahl!" shouted the clerk, presently, working down through the roll-call.

"Ignatius Donnelly!" Sven shouted right back; for now he had no reason to hesitate.

A ripple of laughter greeted his vote, for there were those who regarded the Sage as a joke, and mingled with the laughter some scattering applause, to show that a few took him more seriously, but both demonstrations were speedily checked by the speaker.

Drew polled the full Republican vote. Not a member of the Dwight faction bolted or by so much as the flick of an eyelash registered dissent. Even the fellow who was said to have sold out to both sides—he had

been too sick to take part in the caucus, but he made a quick recovery, occupied his seat in the house during the joint session and with a straight face voted for Drew.

8

An exhibition of sorry servility or of heroic loyalty? You might look at it either way. Certainly it was something to consider when men in the heat of conflict and under the sting of defeat would so sacrifice their preferences for their party's sake. Though the party should be unworthy, still the sacrifice had its merit.

Sven Opsahl wished he might talk with Donnelly about it—that is, Donnelly the philosopher. If parties, as some contended, were necessary to the effectual government of a great people, how should not party loyalty be a praiseworthy sentiment?

It had compassed Donnelly's defeat in the present instance, nevertheless Sven felt well assured that the Sage's comments would not be too much colored by that circumstance.

But they were never more to have speech together. Donnelly slipped out of St. Paul very quietly before the joint ballot was taken and he didn't come back during the session of the Legislature. Subsequently he turned his hand to journalistic work, publishing a periodical ostensibly for farmers, and though it leaned in its utterances toward the radical left wing of the party, there were whispers to the effect that Jim Hill took care of any deficit there might be between the paper's income and outlay.

The Gumbo *Voice* exchanged with Donnelly's journal and Sven greatly enjoyed reading it. Always it had something stimulating to say.

XIII

"There is something in staying close to men and
women and looking on them and in the
contact and odor of them, that pleases the
soul well;
All things please the soul, but these please the
soul well."

XIII

I

IT was a gay winter in St. Paul and the first of the gaiety was the Governor's reception to members of the Legislature.

A miscellaneous and magnificent affair. The Governor that year was a wealthy banker with a royal fashion of doing things. Hearsay credited him, whether justly or unjustly, with having bought his political honors outright and with holding the belief that they came cheaper when so gained, but in so far as that accused him of caring how much anything cost it didn't sound like him. It wasn't like him to ask which way a thing came cheapest if only it was something he fancied.

Certainly no governor of Minnesota had ever given such a reception. Persons in a position to speak with authority estimated that $20,000 wouldn't any more than pay the bills. Very likely the host of the evening expected to gain some political capital by dazzling the senses of the company gathered from every corner of the State, but further than that he was a jolly good fellow who enjoyed treating his guests well.

The reception being in some sense a public function it was held, properly enough, in the spacious chamber of the House of Representatives. The floor was cleared for dancing, and the beauty and chivalry not only of St. Paul and Minneapolis near by, but of towns as far away as Duluth and Fargo and Winona as well,

came and danced. In fact the beauty and the chivalry, as distinguished from the nominal guests of the evening, rather dominated the festivities, members of the Legislature remaining for the most part in the background. A few of them made bold to go up and shake hands with the Governor and his lady, and still fewer danced a step or two, but the majority scarcely ventured beyond the outskirts.

The invitation being general, of course there was a promiscuous turnout. It was a chance for the unelect to touch elbows with the elect, and it wasn't neglected. The parade of finery, though it might have been in better taste, was at all events something to behold and to remember long.

Sven Opsahl, mostly out of a sense of duty, was among those who went up and shook hands. He discovered, by so doing, that his name meant little or nothing in that presence, for though he was asked for it as he came up, and spoke it as plainly as he could, the Governor got it altogether wrong. But otherwise he couldn't complain of being ill treated. While his Excellency had none of Donnelly's magnetic charm, he knew how to be gracious, and his lady still more so, and the member from Gumbo County came through with less of the sense of being out of place than he had thought he might.

He got his first sight of a real clawhammer coat that night, and, what affected him much more profoundly, his first sight of a woman in the full evening dress of the period. The naked shoulders shocked him and even frightened him, but further they fascinated him. He had a panicky feeling that if he couldn't look upon those shoulders more calmly it behooved him, for

the sake of his own peace of mind, to turn his face away—and still he looked.

Before long, upon the promptings of an impulse which he would be ashamed to confess, he mounted to the gallery. He reasoned, though he would have blushed to say so, that much as the women's gowns revealed to him where they stood they would reveal still more if he were to look down upon them from the level of the gallery overhead. Unseemly, not to say scandalous. Nevertheless he went up.

2

In the gallery he encountered Murtagh. The place wasn't nearly as crowded as the floor below and Murtagh sat apart, gazing moodily down at the dancers, as if they bored him.

Apparently no tumultuous thoughts threatened his composure.

Sven Opsahl wasn't so fascinated after that. Murtagh's bored air was somehow a reproach—it accused Sven of being very green and rustic, so to afford another reason why he should be ashamed. Then, too, the novelty of the bare shoulders wore off pretty fast—there were so many of them and they looked so much alike. He beheld the dancing throng in a new light and while he could not be as indifferent as Murtagh evidently was, he could at least frown down his unseemly thoughts.

Naturally enough, after a bit, he and Murtagh got to talking.

Sven began it, not very brilliantly, with some remark in condemnation of the prodigious outlay. Waste, he called it. He was reminded by it of the way the

French kings, as he had read about them, were used to throw money to the birds.

Murtagh's reply was unexpected.

"What birds?" he asked, after thinking a moment.

That was to take the figure of speech more literally than Sven had intended it.

"Harlots mostly—every king kept his harlots and dressed them in velvet."

"Well, I expect somebody had to make the velvet."

"Yes, the weavers of Lyons—it kept them busy supplying the court with velvet."

"A good thing for the weavers, I say—what would have become of them only for the court—and the harlots?"

Sven was silenced—he had never considered the business in that aspect.

"If our great and glorious Governor is spending $20,000 here to-night, somebody gets it," Murtagh pointed out. "Where's the waste, when you come to that?"

Still Sven couldn't say anything, but though the argument ended with that, he didn't go away and pretty soon they found something else to talk about.

Murtagh began it now.

"You're a member of the Legislature?" he inquired.

Sven answered that he was the representative from Gumbo County.

"My home is in Minneapolis," Murtagh made known. "I helped elect the pinhead that represents my district. I was instrumental in throwing the labor vote to him and he promised to find me a job. But I believe he means to give me the double cross. I always

knew he was a pinhead, but I thought I could trust him. I know better now. He's a crook as well as a pinhead. I've about made up my mind to tell him what I think of him and go back to the factory."

Sven listened with a new interest.

"What kind of a factory?" he asked.

"I'm a cigarmaker by trade," Murtagh informed him.

"You belong to a labor union?"

"Sure, I belong to a labor union. A wageworker is a fool these days not to belong. I'm a delegate from my union to the Trades Council. Last year I was president of the Trades Council."

Sven's eyes kindled. Here was something worth while—so much so that he forgot the frivolous dancers. "Why can't the laboring men with their unions and the farmers with their Alliance—why can't they join hands and have everything their way?" he exclaimed.

But Murtagh didn't take fire.

"Who knows what their way is?" he objected.

"They look at things pretty much alike," Sven maintained.

Murtagh shook his head.

"You're wrong there, brother. They're as far apart as the poles in the way they look at things. The farmer's a capitalist even though his only capital is a span of crowbait horses. A laboring man hasn't got any capital—nothing but his bare hands."

"A farmer labors."

"So does John D. Rockefeller. But he ain't a laboring man. No more is a farmer."

3

Sven wasn't ready to yield the point—it was too much like giving up a fond dream—but sooner than he could think of a rejoinder Murtagh proposed that they go down and get a bite to eat. "His Excellency is feeding the multitude to-night and I want to sample the loaves and fishes. I expect they beat what I'm used to."

They made their way down to the cloakrooms adjoining the chamber of the house—it was there the spread had been laid. Nowhere was the great affair more magnificent and nowhere so miscellaneous. Here Sven saw no clawhammer coats and no lovely bare shoulders—only an uncouth mob of very ordinary mortals milling about the mountains of rich food like so many famished cattle. Hundreds ate, other hundreds scrambled and shouldered to get to eat, and manners went by the board.

No seats were set out—they would only have been in the way, for everybody was too busy to sit down. A number of colored waiters, very obliging and very deft, did what they could to serve the repast in something like good form, but good form was a thing forgotten if not unknown. Guests reached past the waiters and grabbed what they wanted, devouring it on the spot without savor of ceremony. Incidentally, there was a great deal of pushing and jostling, with the result that a large part of the food fell to the floor where it was trampled under foot and tracked out through the corridors as far as the grand stairway leading down to the street-level.

Viands fit for the banquets of the gods—if not pearls

cast before swine, something very much in that figure. Safe to say, a majority of the mob had never partaken of fare so dainty. Costly pastries and confections heaped up by the ton. Meats exhibiting in the manner of their preparation the highest perfection of fancy cookery. Tropical fruits so rare as to be a wonder to the eye as well as a delight to the palate. Ices. Drinks.

Drinks in the utmost profusion, but no intoxicants, and they were the only element lacking whereby the gluttonous orgy might have been enhanced, as an orgy. There were to be seen, here and there, guests who were the worse for liquor, but the Governor couldn't be blamed for their condition and that was something to his credit in a day and generation when wine had come under the censure only of the fanatical few.

Sven Opsahl and Murtagh were hungry enough to eat of the good things, but not hungry enough to forget the common decencies. They were disgusted with the show of bad manners and glad to get away from it. They left the reception early. The night was bright and frosty and bracing and the outside air fell like a balm to the spirits. Sven, especially, was lifted up by the touch of it—air like that was his element.

They didn't part at once, but walked a distance together and presently they came to a big, square, plain building where, by the light of the street-lamp, they made out the name of the Great Northern cut into the lintel rock over the door. Sven took the building to be the general offices of the railroad company and he halted to survey it.

Donnelly's tremendous figure of the ocean monster

came back to him. "In there," he remarked, "is where our overlord does his overlording."

Murtagh laughed.

"Jim Hill—the foxy guy!" he chuckled.

Sven could agree with the sentiment—foxy, indeed.

"You got to get up early in the morning if you beat Jim," Murtagh asserted. "Do you mind the Burlington strike here a while back? It was a black eye for the railroads, but trust Hill to snatch victory from defeat. It was the engineers striking and how does he get even with them? He builds engines twice as powerful that haul twice as many cars and so he gets twice as much out of every engineer's labor without having to pay him any more wages. That little old Canuck wears his hair long, but his hair ain't any longer than his head, at that."

They shook hands where Sven turned off to go back to his lodgings.

Murtagh was more than cordial. "I'm glad I ran across you. If you're ever over in Minneapolis, look me up—if I'm not somewhere around the Labor Temple somebody there can tell you where to find me."

Sven promised to do so. "Talk with your people—get them to join with us farmers—I'm sure there are lots of things we both want done that never will be done unless we work together."

Murtagh promised too, and so they parted.

Sven was over in Minneapolis before the end of the winter. He wanted to see the big mills where so much of the farmer's wheat was ground up into flour, but somehow he didn't find the mills so interesting as the place where he got dinner: Davidson's—and the dinner cost him ten cents.

Not a bad dinner either, or badly served. He sat at a table that was fairly clean and a girl brought him meat and bread and coffee—as much as he cared to eat.

Thousands ate with him. As he came away, the sidewalks for a block in both directions were thickly sown with wooden toothpicks which patrons of the resort had used and tossed away.

Davidson's was no doubt a sign of the times. Ten-cent dinners, fifty-cent wheat—cause and effect, but which was which? Sven would have liked to hear what Murtagh might have to say about that—the apologist for luxury and high living. But Murtagh was nowhere to be found. At the Labor Temple they thought he had gone to Chicago to hunt him a job and anyway if he wasn't in Chicago they didn't know where he was.

Years afterwards, when the farmers and the laboring men got together and elected Magnus Johnson and his big voice to the United States Senate from Minnesota, Sven Opsahl, no longer actively interested in politics, recalled his chance meeting with Murtagh and was reminded of the little acorns from which mighty oaks spring.

They never met but the once.

4

The most picturesque of the winter's gaieties was the Ice King's carnival. It was in every way a distinguished affair, without its like anywhere in the world, and it did a great deal to make St. Paul famous, until, after a few years, certain commercial interests got to thinking that the publicity was giving the climate a bad name and causing people to shun Minnesota as

a place to live. Of course, the commercial interests had their way—their disapproval was the last word and the carnival was abandoned. In another generation Louis Hill, son of Jim, promoted a revival, featuring a race of Alaskan sledgedogs, but though the race attracted much attention, the glories of the old carnival were not to be recovered.

It was never more glorious than the winter Sven Opsahl sat in the Legislature for Gumbo County. A real palace was reared, or more properly a castle, out of no material but blocks of ice with salt to mortar them together and it is doubtful if the sun ever shone upon a sight more brilliant and beautiful than the lofty towers and bastions and escarpments, built as it were of crystal yet so substantially that the structure stood for months. The hot Minnesota spring soon made an end of the brilliance and beauty but the last of the ruins didn't vanish until well after the 4th of July.

In connection with the carnival a multitude of clubs were formed, not only in St. Paul, but in many other towns near and far—toboggan clubs, ski clubs, snowshoe clubs, skating clubs, hockey clubs. Each in its own uniform of fur or flannel gaudily colored, they participated in the various sports which, after a week given up to frolic, culminated the last night in the storming of the ice palace.

No Mardi Gras ever saw fun more fast and furious. That last night the mercury fell to twenty degrees below zero and countless noses were nipped, but the carnival spirit suffered no slump.

The parade, though only preliminary to the storming, deserved in its own right to go into history and

take its place among famous pageants. St. Paul and Minneapolis, twin cities but never harmonious, were particularly at cross purposes just then, with Minneapolis passing St. Paul in population for the first time and the census at hand that was to come near causing bloodshed, but the traditional feud gave way for tonight's doings and in the very forefront, acting as escort for the king in his chariot, marched the Minneapolis Flambeau Club, every man holding aloft a flaring torch while he bore his part in glittering evolutions that drew forth continuous roars of applause from the crowds along the way. After these came other clubs hardly less showy, in bewildering array till the line stretched out miles in length.

At a given point the host divided and designated clubs, marching more directly, took possession of the ice palace to defend it and were waiting there when the others came up. A huge bomb hurled into the air and bursting with a deafening bang into a million showering sparks was the signal for the battle to begin—a dazzling battle of fireworks, mostly Roman candles and rockets, though now and then a set piece of appropriate design flamed out. For the space of an hour it seemed as if the very heavens were ablaze. The dark of the moon had been chosen for the display and a multitude accustomed to pyrotechnics only in the pale darkness of summer gave frenzied testimony to their delight in effects heightened by the purple background of a wintry sky.

Sven Opsahl saw the whole show—more of it, indeed, than he relished entirely. Among the marching units there was a snowshoe club made up of students from the State university, boys and girls in mackinaw

coats of fantastic pattern, with long tasseled caps pulled down over their ears, and in the midst of the jolly throng he glimpsed Weese Overturf. She was very jaunty and fetching with her cap tilted awry and the tassel falling over her shoulder in front, while a snowshoe tucked under her arm, or something made to look like a snowshoe, imparted a primitive not to say aboriginal touch that did its part to enliven the picture.

She marched, if a gait so frisky and buoyant could be called marching, side by side with a tall and comely youth, and she laughed up at him and he laughed down at her and Sven Opsahl, looking on, laughed not at all. He was convinced that he had never seen so proud and happy a light in Weese's face.

Afterwards, at the storming of the palace, he caught another glimpse of her. She was discharging Roman candles against the crystal battlements, with the tall and comely youth still at her right hand, and her face was radiant.

The hilarious mood of the hour failed to capture Sven. The universal levity offended him. That more than the waste. Since his talk with Murtagh he could think of prodigality of expenditure with more tolerance. But the frothy levity on the part of a people confronted with so many serious problems—what was it but the proof of a degenerate disregard of consequences?

Sven Opsahl came of a northern stock and to northern stocks the world owes the Puritan outlook, be it blessing or bane. No doubt it was part of Sven's heritage, otherwise he wouldn't have been so ashamed to gaze upon the naked shoulders of the women at the

Governor's reception. But it wasn't the whole of the heritage—the boy was born likewise to such an intellectual honesty that he couldn't shut his eyes to the truth for no better reason than that he didn't happen to relish it. His lack of sympathy with the carnival spirit might have been the effect of his Puritan outlook, only it wasn't. It wasn't and his native honesty wouldn't let him pretend that it was. He knew in his heart that if he hadn't seen Weese Overturf having such a good time with the tall and comely youth the carnival spirit wouldn't have been so bad. Sven knew it and grimly owned up to it.

Back home his apprentice and a tramp printer were getting out the *Voice* during Sven's absence, and a copy of it reached him more or less regularly each week. In the next copy, coming to hand somewhat belatedly, he read that Pick Overturf had been created Duke of Gumbo by the King of the carnival and ordered to attend upon His Majesty during the festivities. That bit of levity struck Sven as being very funny. He thought of Pick dressed up like the clowns he had seen in the parade, and though he couldn't laugh then, he laughed now.

5

He found cheap and convenient lodgings with a German family, the Orths. He was rather pleased to learn that John Orth, the man of the household, worked in the Great Northern shops—pleased because he had a curiosity to know how the big boss of the company was regarded by the laborers in his employ.

He wasn't long finding out, so far as that particular

laborer was concerned. John read the newspapers and though reticent by habit he could speak out without prompting when aroused.

"Chim Hill, vat for you fight him already?" he protested, before Sven had a chance to say anything.

"You wouldn't have to ask that if you were a farmer out in the Red River Valley," Sven assured him.

"So! You bin farmer?"

Sven admitted that he wasn't.

"I print a newspaper."

"So!" Orth shrugged his shoulders meaningly. "Maybe if papers don't fight Chim Hill so hard the farmers don't feel so bad."

Sven wasn't looking for a controversy just then and he fell silent. Further, his curiosity was satisfied—his landlord, at least, had made it perfectly plain where he stood.

Another day, a mild and balmy Sabbath, Orth proposed that they go for a tramp, perhaps out into the country if they didn't tire sooner, and inasmuch as nothing could be more to Sven's fancy they set forth at once.

John Orth being the host of the occasion, it was left to him to determine what direction they should take, and he guided their footsteps up into the Summit Avenue district, where the grand houses were. Among the very grandest was the Governor's. The Governor and the Governor's father lived near neighbors and their houses were palaces fit for any king.

"There must be money in banking," Sven commented.

"Yah—plenty money," Orth assented.

Not far beyond, they halted across the way from a

singular structure, larger than any they had seen and very massive, but devoid to the point of severity of anything like adornment.

"Is that somebody's house?" Sven asked, doubtfully.

"Vat he look like?" John Orth chuckled, as if he might have some sort of joke up his sleeve.

"Well, if I was to guess," Sven replied, "I'd say a hospital or something like that."

John Orth beamed.

"Chim Hill—he lif in him," he stated.

Sven was pretty much floored.

"Jim Hill!" he repeated.

"Yah—his house—he build him."

"If I was Jim Hill and building a house, I don't believe I'd build it like that."

"So?" A mocking grin overspread the German's genial face. "Vell, Chim Hill he look ahead to ven he die. Ven he die he gif house to city of Son Powl to be for a hospital where poor feller can go and be sick sheap. That why he build him so."

They walked on, and John Orth was silent for a while. But presently, and now the mocking grin had given way to an expression of solicitude that was almost anxiety, he broke out:

"I don't know if it bin much fun to be Chim Hill!"

With that he recounted an incident. A kinsman of his, Wolf Hogref, was a caretaker about Hill's country estate near White Bear Lake, some ten miles out from St. Paul. There the big boss spent his week-ends and usually he brought guests out with him. Once it was a party of men, the womenfolks being away, and Hogref, busy about the gardens, heard them singing.

"Vat you tink he sing?" Orth demanded, eagerly.

Sven could not hazard a guess.

"I tell you." John Orth's honest eyes were misty as he repeated, in his shaky English, the words of the old familiar hymn:

"Safely through another week,
God has brought us on our way."

By Hogref's testimony, as Orth repeated it, Mr. Hill had sung louder than the others and with much feeling. "I tink he glad, like he haf a hard time," John asserted, solemnly.

Sunday once more and the Orths, coming home from church, brought with them a Hungarian youth whom they addressed as Kish. Kish was an apprentice to the Great Northern boilermaker. "He haf some ting he like to show you," John Orth explained, glowing proudly.

What Kish had to show was a letter. It seemed that among the boys in his shop there had been a rivalry to see which of them should save, in the course of a year, the largest percentage of his wages. Kish had won the race and the letter was in the nature of an acknowledgment and a commendation. The boy had it carefully wrapped and he gave it into Sven's hands with the air of regarding it as something very precious.

To quote it in full:

MY DEAR MR. KISH:

It gratifies me very much to learn that we have so thrifty a young man in our shops. You have a right to be proud of the showing you have made and I congratulate you heartily.

It has a meaning and an importance beyond the

fund you have laid up, though you are sure to find that of great use. For unless a boy can save something from his wages, however small they may be, he has not the seeds of success in him.

With best wishes,

JAMES J. HILL.

It put Sven in mind of Weese Overturf's letter about the books years ago, and the thought of Weese was depressing.

XIV

"The pig pushes his brother from the trough? Why, that is a commonplace of our life. There is a whole school of so-called philosophers and political economists busied in elevating the pig's shove into a social and political necessity."

XIV

I

SEATS in the House were assigned for the most part by lot. The four or five members past sixty years old were permitted, as a mark of respect to their age, to select their seats before the drawing took place, but the rest had to trust to luck.

Slips of paper, each bearing a number, from one up, were shaken in a hat; out of the hat members drew at random, and in the order of the numbers that fell to them they made their choice. That is to say the member with the lowest number chose first, then the member with the next highest number and so forth till everybody had a seat. Sven Opsahl drew No. 83—so far down the list that his choice was little better than the proverbial Hobson's.

In the seat which fell to the member from Gumbo County at length he had Matlock for his near neighbor. Matlock was No. 3 in the drawing, with only half a dozen ahead of him, nevertheless he picked a seat far back and as inconspicuous as any in the house.

But if his seeming modesty was the trait which struck Sven first, he soon discovered others.

Before the drawing was over, indeed, he learned that Matlock represented a district in St. Paul so delimited that it could boast of having among its inhabitants more very rich men than any other in Minnesota, if not in the whole United States. Sven was assured that a large majority of the voters there wore

silk stockings as a regular thing and silk had not yet ceased to be the badge of affluence. The Silk Stockings, as he heard them called, dominated at the polls and whomsoever they sent to the Legislature had to belong to the order. Sven regarded his neighbor with new interest.

Matlock's choice of a seat seemed no less extraordinary in the light of these disclosures. Did it mean that he wished to hide his candle under a bushel or did it mean that he hadn't any candle to hide and was conscious of his limitations? Of course a man could be very rich and wear silk stockings every day and still not have much brains.

Sven wondered, inquired further, and was more than ever astonished. Though so little famous in the ordinary sense that the member from Gumbo had never heard of him, Matlock was an eminent lawyer notwithstanding, and so highly esteemed in his specialty that clients came to consult him from as far away as the Atlantic seaboard and cheerfully paid him $500 a day to appear in court for them.

Sven couldn't understand it. If Matlock earned $500 a day appearing in court, what was he doing here in the Lower House of the Legislature where the pay was only $5 a day, with no allowance for mileage, since he lived in St. Paul?

To make the mystery still more mysterious, he was seldom if ever absent. He sat in his seat, listening attentively to the debate though taking no part in it, answering the roll-calls religiously—in short evincing, beyond almost any other member, a conscientious regard for the duties of his office.

Whether because he failed to push his inquiries far

enough or because he didn't ask in the right quarter, Sven never found out the answer until he stumbled upon it inadvertently. A printed list of new bills introduced into the House each day was laid on every member's desk the next morning and Sven, glancing it over cursorily, came upon a title that let the cat out of the bag:

"House File No. 137. By Matlock. A bill for an act to vacate the forfeiture of the grant of land to the Bemidji & Grand Marais Railway Company."

He wondered no more after that. Pikestaff couldn't be plainer. The interests which wanted the forfeiture vacated had sent the lawyer to the Legislature as they might send him into court—to see the thing through. The member from Gumbo was as sure of it as if he had heard the instructions and seen the retainer paid over.

2

The farmers of the Alliance had no giant in St. Paul that year—good citizens and up to the average in point of ability, but not an outstanding personality among them. It was none other than Matlock who nominated Sven Opsahl their ablest man.

Informally. The House had adjourned for the day and Sven, repairing to the cloakroom to get his wraps, encountered Matlock there. Hitherto no speech had passed between them except perfunctory greetings, but now as they walked out together Matlock fell into step as by way of indicating a wish to bear Sven company.

The member from Gumbo didn't know what to make of it, the more as Matlock had nothing to say until they came out to the Wabasha Street front of the capitol, where a very stylish team of horses and an equally

stylish sleigh piled high with rich robes were waiting at the curb in charge of a servant. Matlock, with a gesture of invitation, asked Sven to get into the sleigh.

Sven, instinctively on his guard, was affected with a sentiment of distrust. He hung back, and Matlock laughed indulgently.

"Very well—if you'd rather not go in my conveyance, I will go in yours. Shank's mare, eh? Do you mind if I walk with you?"

His gracious courtesy made Sven more than a little ashamed of his doubtful manners and to the extent that he was ashamed his distrust was disarmed. He didn't know what to say, though, and the servant having driven away with the horses and sleigh there ensued a silence.

Matlock appeared to be thinking. "You impress me as about the ablest man among the Alliance members of the Legislature," he said at length, "and as such I wish to talk with you."

Sven knew less than ever what to answer. His distrust returned upon him. Was it Matlock's notion to fool him with flattery?

Whether it was or not, his failure to respond at once in no wise disconcerted the lawyer.

"Of course," he went on, "you know why I am a member of the Legislature. At least I am not concealing the purpose which has brought me here. I am here to get the forfeiture of the Bemidji & Grand Marais land grant vacated. I conceive that I can't be about a better business, and when I say that I consider the public welfare first. I am told that you are much opposed to the vacation of the forfeiture—that you made it the particular issue in your campaign for

election. I understand, too, that the Alliance members generally are of your way of thinking. Will you tell me why?"

Sven felt awkward and at a disadvantage. There were no polished phrases at his tongue's end—he knew no way but to be blunt and his heart misgave him.

"We think Jim Hill is rich enough already without our turning over these lands to him," he blurted out.

He expected to meet with an indignant denial, and when nothing of the sort was forthcoming, the effect was to prompt him to be still more blunt.

"Aren't you Jim Hill's man in the Legislature?" he asked, without rightly thinking how it would sound.

"I represent the first district of Ramsey County in the Legislature," Matlock replied quietly.

So quietly and without heat that Sven felt rebuked.

"Of course—we understand that—you got to represent some district or you wouldn't be in the Legislature," he stammered. "But the first district—the rich men in it—they sent you here to—to—"

"To get that forfeiture vacated—certainly. I told my neighbors that I wanted to be sent to the Legislature and I told them why. There was no secret about it—no underhand work. They agreed with me that I could be about no better business—that I could in no way render the people of my district and city and state a more valuable service. If you were elected because you oppose vacation, where is the sin in my being elected because I favor vacation?"

Sven recovered his confidence a little.

"Isn't it a fact," he demanded, "that if we vacate the forfeiture we'll put millions of dollars into Jim Hill's pocket?"

He was very much in earnest—so much so that he forgot and said Yim Hill. He forgot just for the moment and in a moment the mortifying slip was out.

But Matlock paid no attention—not the least among his courtesies that night.

"If we vacate the forfeiture," he made answer, "the result will be the construction, under the terms of the grant, of the Bemidji & Grand Marais railway. No doubt there will be other results, but they sink into insignificance by comparison. Do I need to tell you, Mr. Opsahl, what happens to a wilderness when a railway is built through it?"

"Yes, I know about that. My country—where I live—it was a wilderness once and the railroad made it part of Jim Hill's kingdom—just like Jim Hill was king." He repeated the name, firmly, so as to demonstrate that he could speak it right.

"Surely, Mr. Opsahl, you don't mean that any sort of improvement, no matter how much it promises to benefit the public, ought to be blocked and defeated if it incidentally puts money into Mr. Hill's pocket?"

"Jim Hill has got money enough," Sven insisted, doggedly.

"That may well be," Matlock conceded. "But the harm of making him richer, admitting for the sake of your argument that the vacation of the forfeiture will make him richer—isn't it rather a trifle in comparison with the harm of defeating so beneficial a measure?"

"Anyhow, I don't believe you will ever get us Alliance men to vote for your bill unless you satisfy us that Jim Hill ain't behind it. We got to know that, Mr. Matlock."

"Why should you care who is behind it so long as you cannot doubt that it will promote the general wel-

fare? It seems to me that as the sworn custodians of the public welfare—sworn to uphold it and to serve it in every way we can—we should not look beyond that undenied and undeniable fact."

Matlock had the last word. They came to the corner where Sven, as he made known, was accustomed to wait for a street-car to convey him the rest of the way to his lodgings, and the car was already in sight. Matlock held out his hand and what else he had to say was not of a controversial nature.

"My bill," he informed Sven, "has been reported out and is near the head of general orders—it will probably be called up the next time the House sits in committee of the whole—perhaps to-morrow. I expect to speak and set forth my reasons for thinking the bill ought to become a law. I want you to be there and hear me. My remarks will be particularly addressed to you and the other Alliance men."

Sven shook hands, though not without constraint. He wasn't satisfied with what he had been saying. He was troubled by a sense of having been bested—he had been outdone in courtesy if not in logic. Had he been to some extent won over—perhaps by flattery? He couldn't be sure. But whether or no, he couldn't refuse to shake hands and he promised not to be absent when the bill should be called up. "I want to hear you speak," he declared.

He was sincere in saying that. He didn't doubt that any speech of Matlock's would be worth listening to.

3

House File No. 137 was making a stir. Every day, when the speaker announced the order of petitions and memorials, pages came flocking up the aisles with rolls

of paper which they handed to the clerk—petitions relating to Matlock's bill.

The clerk was required to make some sort of pretense of reading them—respect for a petition was a tradition going back to the days of the Stuarts in England. But he got out of it as easily as he could. Turning back the end of a roll he glanced at the first name signed.

"John Jones and 983 others," he mumbled, "pray that H. F. No. 137 do pass."

Or, in the same breath:

"Thomas Brown and 1,129 others pray that H. F. No. 137 do not pass."

Once the roll of paper was so big that two pages staggered under the weight of it. More than 20,000 names were signed. "Samuel H. Mortimer and 20,118 others," the clerk proclaimed, less perfunctorily than usual, for so weighty a roll was at least a novelty and by that worthy of more attention, "pray that H. F. No. 137 do pass."

Sven Opsahl went to some pains to look Samuel H. Mortimer up and found that he was a claim agent attached to the legal department of the Great Northern railroad. It was an easy guess that he had been detailed to obtain the signatures by personal solicitation—anyhow, Sven so guessed. Of course, any number of signatures to any kind of petition were to be had merely for the asking. The signers seemed to be city folks mostly—in a city a few brisk fellows like Mortimer could roll up a big petition in just a little while and without much work.

Though of trifling importance, as Sven estimated it,

the big petition did show forth something of the cleavage of sentiment. Broadly speaking, the cleavage was between the city and the country—on the one hand the commercial interests, with the numerous dependents whom they could control, and on the other hand the agrarians.

The Legislature was similarly divided and the twelve Alliance votes were far from measuring the whole agrarian strength as it affected H. F. No. 137. Many Republican members represented constituencies of that color and they were likewise against the bill. Indeed, though the result could be in no other respect foretold it was at least certain that the final vote would disregard party lines wholly.

4

The process of enacting a bill into a law did not bring it fairly before the house until the second reading, as it was termed. The bill had its first reading when it was introduced. Being introduced and read for the first time it was sent to the appropriate standing committee to be considered there and, unless suffered to die in its cradle, reported back to the House with or without recommendation. If reported back the bill took its place on general orders, that being the parliamentary name for the list of titles awaiting consideration by the committee of the whole House, and when reached in its turn it had its second reading.

It was in committee of the whole, if anywhere, that a bill was debated. The title having been reached, the clerk read the bill for the second time and the speaker asked if there were any remarks. Sometimes

there were and sometimes there were not. There were plenty when H. F. No. 137 came up.

But though speeches were made for and against the measure, most of them didn't amount to much. Passions were torn to tatters and the rafters were made to ring repeatedly, but beyond an abundance of sound and fury the product was virtually negligible. Two or three Alliance men indulged in tirades so weak that Sven Opsahl was sorry for them. He had abandoned his own intention of saying something, since his talk with Matlock. If Matlock was going to be heard, the member from Gumbo had no wish to break lances with him.

The House sat till far into the night in order to give everybody a chance. Matlock waited till the last and it was past eleven o'clock when he rose to address the chair: for the first time—until then his voice had been silent except in answer to roll-calls.

5

He began with a bold quotation—bold because of its source.

"I cannot forbear, Mr. Speaker," he said, "to repeat the words of a very great American, whose sentiments are of especial interest to us here in Minnesota for the reason that he lives among us, our near neighbor. I refer to Mr. James J. Hill. 'Our richest mines,' Mr. Hill has said, 'are in the top six inches of the soil.'

"So it is, Mr. Speaker—nobody can doubt it who stops to think. The old adage is emphatically and everlastingly right—the farmer, mining the top six inches of the soil, is the man who feeds us all. We

cannot eat gold and silver and precious stones, and we can wear them only as useless ornaments—they serve neither to keep us warm nor to cover our nakedness. In the last analysis they have no worth except as they may be made to purchase the necessaries of life for which we have to look to the farmer. Even iron, the most useful of metals, is never so useful as when it is made up into tools to help the farmer in his work; for though agriculture is not the only industry it is the basic industry upon which all others depend, to which all others are in a very real sense subordinate and auxiliary.

"Mr. Speaker, there has been too much talk about iron in connection with the pending bill. Gentlemen have spoken here to-day and they seem without exception to have assumed that northeastern Minnesota is only so much waste land except for the mineral deposits there and that the Bemidji & Grand Marais railroad, if built, will serve no end but to develop these deposits.

"Mr. Speaker, I can assure the gentlemen and any others who may be interested in knowing the facts, that the minerals of northeastern Minnesota, rich and extensive though they no doubt are, make up but a small part of the wealth of that favored region. Beyond denial it is a rough country, but it is more than a jumble of broken rocks heaped helter-skelter by some volcanic convulsion or the drift of glaciers centuries ago. Here and there, at no infrequent intervals, either, are valleys, varying in extent from a few acres to hundreds, where the soil is deep and of almost inexhaustible fertility, where an abundance of moisture is always at hand, and where, under thrifty tillage, big crops may be grown year after year with never a failure.

"I grant you, Mr. Speaker, that there is no room in these valleys for farming on a great scale, but is that a drawback necessarily? No, indeed, it is not. The little farm well tilled, what does more to make our country great and prosperous? Who is more worthy and worth while than the small farmer with his ten or twenty or forty acres? Who plays a more important part in shaping our national destinies? Far be it from me to disparage the big farms. Out where my friend, the gentleman from Gumbo County, has his home the fields are broad and they are beautiful. Nothing is to be more admired than a billowing sea of growing wheat that extends as far as the eye can reach—I know no sight more inspiring. But when all is said, our salvation is the small farmer who tills his land and tends his flocks with his own hand and asks no favors of any man. That is where we look, and seldom in vain, for the sturdy independence which is the republic's best reliance, without which no republic can long endure.

"Mr. Speaker, I am not guessing when I make the prediction that the Bemidji & Grand Marais railroad, if built in accordance with the terms of the grant, will develop agricultural resources such as may well astonish the world. The world needs them, too—the United States needs them—Minnesota needs them. They will do their part to replenish the food supply which, if we are to believe the experts in statistics, is already in danger of being outrun by the demand. In that sense we of the Minnesota legislature have the world's welfare in our keeping—our responsibility extends far beyond the constituencies which have sent

us here, out across our boundaries to other nations, across the oceans to other continents.

"Mr. Speaker, the percentage of waste land up yonder in the northern wilds is amazingly small if only we are wise enough to make the most of the natural resources there. Apart from the valleys made fabulously fertile by untold centuries of erosion breaking the rock down into soil, where towering cedars and hemlocks bear witness to the presence, in lavish abundance, of the elements that go to nourish plant life—apart from these treasure-houses ready to open at the touch of the farmer's wand, are the higher reaches which, though they may never be brought under the plow, afford pasturage for sheep and goats—wild grasses waiting to be transformed, at almost no expense, into the choicest of meat and the finest of wool.

"Do I mean to say, then, Mr. Speaker, that iron plays but an unimportant part in the development of the country? No, indeed—such is not my meaning. The part played by iron is of the utmost importance, for without it there could be no development. The iron is a very godsend.

"Obviously, the country cannot be opened up except as the railroad is built through it, and no less obviously the railroad cannot be built without the expenditure of a great sum of money—such a sum as no grant of land can render available unless there enters into the reckoning some element which will give the land the character of what the bankers call quick assets. Let me repeat, Mr. Speaker—unless the land has the character of quick assets no grant of it is going to put through so enormously difficult an enterprise.

"Agricultural resources, however rich and varied,

are not enough—the return from them is extended over too long a time. I daresay so much was understood by the men who undertook to build the railroad in the first place—even though they had been fully acquainted with the agricultural resources of the region, they couldn't have gone ahead on the strength of these alone. Their hope was in the timber. The forests of pine had the effect of making the land a quick asset so far as they went. But it very soon appeared that they didn't go far enough and that is why the enterprise was abandoned. Those men found, on investigation, that the timber wasn't sufficient to afford the needful funds and they could do nothing but let their charter lapse.

"So I say the discovery of iron is a very godsend. The iron has had the effect of giving the land the character of assets not only quick but virtually unlimited. Quick money—big money. Though railroad building in so rough a country is immensely costly, the iron will pay. Not only that, Mr. Speaker; where the original plans contemplated the cheapest construction that could be made to answer, the iron permits the best construction, regardless of expense. Bridges, and hundreds of them are necessary, may be of solid masonry instead of flimsy wood; and where the first plans proposed to go around obstacles, though the way should thereby be greatly lengthened, no such devices need be resorted to now—the way may be virtually that straight line which is the shortest distance between two points."

6

Matlock spoke for more than an hour. He tore no passion and he smote no rafters. His delivery was

conversational. His figures of speech were the plainest and commonest, such as everyday people employ without thinking of them as figures. He seemed by his manner less the earnest advocate pleading a cause and more a teller of tales whose only object was to amuse and entertain. It was like listening to an informative yet never dry lecture dealing with some unfamiliar wonderland.

Sven Opsahl was left a prey to conflicting emotions, as strong as any among them the humiliating sense of having approached the subject in an unworthy spirit, of having let a narrow bigotry blind him to the larger aspects. Why had he needed to be told about those aspects? Why hadn't he seen them for himself?

He felt insecure in his position, as if his defenses had been broken down. Was he indeed, as Matlock argued, doing wrong to vote against the bill?

He had to make up his mind at once. Matlock finished his speech, still in the key of restraint and with no burst of eloquence at the end, and he had no sooner sat down than the presiding officer was heard to ask, in the set form of words, the further pleasure of the house. Of course the debate was over—no member would venture to speak after Matlock. Further debate would have given Sven time to get his bearings, but even as he was conscious of wishing to be so favored a voice offered the usual motion—that H. F. No. 137 be reported out of the committee and recommended to pass.

There were no roll-calls in committee of the whole. "You have heard the motion—the question is on the motion," said the speaker. "Those in favor will say 'Aye.'"

Voices responded—their number uncertain, but by the robust sound they made a good many.

"Those opposed will say 'No.' "

Other voices responded—robustly—likewise a good many.

"The ayes appear to have it," said the speaker. "The ayes—"

But before he could give them the decision the cry went up: "Division! Division!"

"A division is called for. Those in favor of the motion will rise and remain standing until they can be counted."

Half the house, more or less, stood up while the clerk threaded his way about, counting with his pencil.

"Those opposed will rise," the speaker directed, and the other half of the house stood up.

The clerk finished the count and the speaker struck the desk lightly with his gavel.

"The ayes are 53, the noes are 49—the ayes have it and the motion prevails," he announced.

7

That vote, of course, wasn't the last. A bill might be defeated in the committee of the whole, but it couldn't be finally victorious there. The 53 ayes and 49 noes meant no more than that H. F. No. 137 had achieved another step toward enactment. It had still to clear the high hurdle—the third reading when the roll would be called and every member would go on record as answering or refusing to answer.

Sven Opsahl didn't get his mind made up. He neither joined his voice with the others nor stood up to be counted—for the first and only time, he dodged

the vote. Two hours ago he hadn't harbored a doubt —now there was nothing in his mind but doubt. His convictions were as shaken as if a blast had been set off under them.

When the speaker bade those opposed to the motion and the bill to say no, Sven was in a manner stricken dumb and he was like a man palsied when the speaker bade those opposed to stand up. Such the spell which Matlock had laid upon the member from Gumbo County. It was the most amazing experience of his life—so utterly at variance with anything he had foreseen that he was affected with a sense of unreality. Almost he could believe that he had fallen asleep and dreamed a dream.

The House adjourned at once and as in a dream he drifted out with the crowd. Two or three spoke to him, but he scarcely knew what they were saying or what he said in reply. Once out of the building the crowd, going its several ways, dispersed quickly and left him alone with the great solemn soul of the night. That was a relief and a consolation and he walked up and down the empty streets till dawn of day, trying to touch bottom in the sea of uncertainty where he found himself cast away.

He had dodged the vote in committee of the whole and no great harm done—if he had voted, the result would have been no different. But what about the third reading, when the clerk would call his name and wait till he answered or refused to answer?

Was he still ready to vote against the vacation of the forfeiture? If not, was he ready to vote for the vacation? And if he should vote for the vacation, what would the world say of him?

His world—his constituents back in Gumbo—the other Alliance men.

He knew only too well. They would say that he had sold his vote. Whatever professions of conscientious conviction he might make, nobody would believe him. He would be forever branded as the vilest of traitors, the traitor who betrays his cause for money. He would be an outcast with none to say a kind word for him, his prospects wrecked, his life ruined beyond repair. Nevertheless, if he believed that the forfeiture ought to be vacated, could he vote against the vacation?

Did he believe? Had Matlock actually persuaded him or merely befuddled him?

Toward morning, as he plodded up and down, a policeman halted him, asked him what he was doing abroad at so unseasonable an hour, and he could think of nothing better to say for himself than that he didn't care to go home yet. Where was his home? He gave John Orth's street and number, and the policeman whistled under his breath—it was more than four miles from where they stood.

The officer smelled of Sven's breath, suspecting drink.

"You look like a decent sort," he said, and ended with conducting the wayfarer to an owl car that would set him down not far from John Orth's. To the driver of the car the policeman spoke a few words in a low voice and his thought was plain enough—he had a notion that Sven might be mentally unbalanced.

8

No history of H. F. No. 137 would be complete without some account of the Rigdon affair. Whether

that curious incident had much or little to do with the fate of the bill, at all events it is part of the record, and of its effect in helping the gentleman from Gumbo County to come to terms with his perplexities there could be no doubt.

George Rigdon, an Alliance man representing a newly formed county in the southwestern tier, a very ordinary personage, but destined to a wide celebrity of a sort, made his home during the session with a sister living in St. Paul. She was married to a small merchant named Bernheim, and their home was over the store.

The first hint of what grew into a vast sensation was when Mrs. Bernheim called up the police in the middle of the night and reported her brother missing under circumstances which alarmed her very much.

Rigdon had formed some acquaintances in St. Paul, among them a certain Polson. Polson and Rigdon, indeed, became cronies and when, earlier in the night, a hack drew up at Mrs. Bernheim's door and the driver made known that he had been sent to bring Rigdon to Polson's home, where Polson had been taken suddenly sick, while the proposal was unusual nobody thought wrong of it. Rigdon got into the hack and was driven away.

In about an hour, who should call up Mrs. Bernheim but Polson himself. He hadn't been sick, and he had sent no hack. That was when the stir began—the police were notified just as quickly as a badly scared woman could get them on the wire. That there was foul play afoot Mrs. Bernheim didn't in the least doubt.

House File No. 137 was slated to come up for its third reading the next day.

The morning papers were out bright and early with shrieking accounts—facts and rumors of facts enough to upset the whole town. Both towns, in fact, for the missing member was as likely to be secreted in Minneapolis, ten miles up the river, as in St. Paul. A general alarm had gone out to the two police forces and they were leaving no stone unturned.

Feeling ran high. Everyday business was suspended while citizens generally, if they didn't actually join in the hunt, lent their very active sympathy. It was such an outrage as made the ground seem thin under your feet and you were an uncommon sort if you didn't feel the call to do something about it, though what you did should be no more than to express your indignation.

Citizens gathered in groups to express their indignation weren't long putting two and two together. The papers were full of the outrage, but not too full to make known the highly significant circumstance of H. F. No. 137 being at the top of the calendar of the House, where it was due to come to a final vote that very day. Nor did they omit, in speaking of Rigdon, to mention his being an Alliance man, and with that the inference was too plain to be missed. Everybody understood that the Alliance men were fighting the bill; two and two went together, as you might say, of their own motion; and straightway the word was flying from lip to lip that the interests back of the bill were at the bottom of the mischief. Though the papers weren't daring to say anything like that, citizens lay under no such restraint, and almost from the

first the outrage was being laid at the door of those interests.

The long and short of it being, if you could believe what everybody was saying, that Rigdon had been spirited away to keep him from voting against the bill.

9

It was an injury to the House of Representatives to steal its member, and more and more, as the morning wore on, that aspect of the outrage came to the front. The police were no doubt doing their utmost, but so far without result. Though both cities had been raked and combed, high and low, and dozens of professional crooks who might have had a hand in the job were rounded up, not a trace of Rigdon had been uncovered. In that posture what would the House do by way of vindicating its dignity?

The Legislature convened at noon, and long before that hour measures had to be taken to stem the rush of people to the galleries—the pressure from behind actually threatened to push those in front through or over the railings and pitch them headlong down to the floor below. There had never been, in those precincts, anything like the crowd that swarmed up the stairways. It was hard to believe that so persistent a mob could be actuated by no stronger sentiment than curiosity.

Matlock's seat was pretty well back and necks were craned to get sight of him, but if the more or less invidious attention which he attracted served in any degree to disturb him he gave no sign. He came in rather early and made his way quietly among the desks till he reached his own, giving greeting here and there

as he caught a member's eye in passing, looking as he always looked, manifesting no concern. There was never any approach to levity in his manner and it was no graver now than usual. He sat down facing the chair without so much as a glance in the direction of the jostling, peering galleries.

The proceedings were slow in developing the expected sensations. Indeed, nothing could be tamer at the start. On the hour of twelve the speaker let fall his gavel and when the House had come to order the clerk called the roll. The roll-call disclosed a quorum present and the speaker so announced. The reading of the preceding day's journal came next, and when some member stood up and moved to dispense with that formality it was only what some member did at every session. After that, the speaker named over the various heads under which business ordinarily came up—reports of committees, introduction of bills, petitions and memorials, and so forth. Listless futilities, tediously dragged out—it was fully an hour until the House reached the calendar and to the crowd jammed into the gallery and waiting for sensations to develop it may well have seemed twice as long.

The calendar being reached, proceedings livened up a bit. The first title, a bill that nobody ever heard of, went through with something like a rush. Theoretically a third reading meant that the bill had actually to be read, the whole of it, in a loud voice and distinctly, but in practise the clerk pronounced only now and then a word, and so long as there was no objection now and then a word sufficed—the various readings were only a parliamentary pretense anyway. The first title on the calendar to-day got uncommonly short

shrift. The third reading and the roll-call together didn't take ten minutes. Perhaps as many as a dozen members took the trouble to answer *aye* as their names were spoken, none answered *no* and the bill was passed.

House File No. 137 came next.

"House File No. 137," the speaker intoned. "The clerk will report the bill."

The crowd knew what that meant, and in the midst of a breathless stillness the clerk began to read, hurdling over words, sentences, whole paragraphs. But even in that headlong fashion he hadn't got far when Matlock stood up.

"Mr. Speaker," he said.

"The gentleman from Ramsey County," said the speaker, extending recognition in the usual form.

Matlock waited a moment, but not to suggest indecision—a sort of rhetorical pause though with no hint of artifice.

"In behalf of those of us, both in and out of the Legislature, who favor the bill now pending, I have only to say, in reference to the charge that we have abducted a member of the House in order to prevent his voting—in reference to that charge I have only to say that it is equal to taxing us with being fools as well as knaves. That we have horns under our hats and hoofs in our boots is in certain quarters an article of faith with which I am not disposed, at the moment, to quarrel, but I will venture to point out the inconsistency, as it seems to me, of suspecting us of resorting to a trick which cannot help, as any fool can see, but bring disaster to our cause.

"Mr. Speaker, so fatal to our cause is such a trick certain to be that I might with far more reason accuse

the opposition to the bill with having abducted our missing member; but I do no such thing.

"I accuse nobody. My sole purpose in rising now is to ask, Mr. Speaker, that House File No. 137 be sent back to the foot of the calendar, to be taken up at some future time when, as I trust, we shall be better able to deal with it as it deserves to be dealt with."

No more—that was the only sensation. The speaker asked if there was any objection, and when there was none, he declared it the will of the House that the bill revert to the foot of the calendar, where there would be fifty or more titles ahead of it.

10

The crowd jostled out of the galleries and cleared the stairways and were met as they emerged into the street by newsboys crying that Rigdon had been found. He had showed up at his sister's house early in the afternoon with his nerves a good deal shaken, but otherwise unharmed.

He related that he had been set at liberty across the river in West St. Paul, but where else he had been he couldn't say, though it seemed certain that he had been conveyed about a good deal. He had been blindfolded and gagged most of the time, but beyond that he had been treated very well.

He could give no description of the parties who had spirited him away. Even the driver of the hack who called for him at his sister's had somehow managed to keep his face hidden, and the others wore masks in Rigdon's presence.

He was shaken and scared. He besought the police

not to press the pursuit. He was afraid of what the villains who had abducted him might do if they should be put to any inconvenience. So far as he was concerned, he would prefer to say no more about the outrage.

Toward the vindication of its affronted dignity the House of Representatives took no steps, either that day or thereafter. Matlock's action with reference to his bill stood for a testimony to his good faith—it put a new face on the situation and when, shortly, it became known that Rigdon had returned home none the worse for his adventure, the face of the situation was so far altered as to call for an entirely different approach.

In other words, if the House had been uncertain before as to what it ought to do in the premises, it was uncertain now whether it ought to do anything and, having started in to grind away at the regular order, it kept right on grinding.

But the proceedings were more than ever listless and perfunctory. A few more roll-calls, with almost nobody taking the trouble to answer, an hour or so in committee of the whole, with a little debate that never once struck a spark of real feeling, then adjournment for the day. The house was swamped with unfinished business, but members were in no mood to buckle down to serious labor. At the last, in fact, there wasn't anywhere near a quorum present.

II

Sven Opsahl, as much affected as anybody by the unexpected turn of events and more than a little glad in his heart that he wasn't going to be called upon to

vote—he was among the faithful few who sat through to the end and just before adjournment a telegram was delivered to him. It wasn't a familiar experience—in his whole life he had never received more than two or three telegrams and the bare sight of the yellow envelope was enough to give him an unpleasant premonition, as if there could be no such hurry about any but bad news. Nor could he guess who might be so anxious to communicate with him that only the wires were quick enough.

He didn't find out from the message, for it was unsigned. The date-line showed that it came from Duluth, but who in Duluth so much as knew of his existence? For the moment he couldn't think of a soul.

The purport of the telegram, too, was far from clear—almost, you might say, cryptic:

"Rigdon in pay vacationists. Abduction a blind. Real play foxier."

Just ten words—somebody had known how to condense in order to save tolls. Too condensed, in fact, to be readily understood.

Was it meant to be a warning, and, if so, why had it come to him rather than some other member? He couldn't think he had been so conspicuous as to be for that reason singled out by a stranger.

Rigdon in the pay of the vacationists? Sven didn't believe it. The abduction a blind? He had no way of knowing the truth as to that, but if the abduction was a blind Rigdon would have to be a crook. No—something of a dolt, but no crook.

12

The house had its own post-office and two or three times a day the pages brought members their mail. The last delivery had been delayed that evening and Sven was still puzzling over the telegram when the week's copy of the Gumbo *Voice* was laid on his desk. He picked it up and tore off the wrapper.

About the first thing, as by instinct, his eyes sought out the personals—the real news from home—but with the mystery of the telegram still on his mind he read rather inattentively until, halfway down the page, he came to something about Weese Overturf. The name was enough to bring him out of his preoccupation and he read, with undivided interest now:

> Miss Louise Overturf, in her third year at the State university in Minneapolis, has quit her studies there to accept a position of responsibility with the Zenith Investment Company, of Duluth. Miss Overturf's host of friends in Gumbo will heartily wish her good luck in her new venture.

Sven still had the telegram in his hand. If he could guess now who had sent it he was as far as ever from guessing why. Was Weese once more trying to make fun of him?

He hadn't forgot the scrap of paper thrust through his office door back in Gumbo—it had as good as elected him to the Legislature and if it had been Weese's work and she had meant by it to trap him into doing something ridiculous, it hadn't had any such effect. Dared he believe that she hadn't meant anything of the sort? He didn't know that she had thrust the paper through his door, any more than he knew

that she had sent the telegram he held in his hand; but if she had—

He could understand that her new connection with the Zenith Investment Company might have put her in a position to find out a thing or two, and if the telegram was by way of passing them along to him—

Sven Opsahl was the last member out of the house—the chamber was deserted by everybody but the caretakers cleaning up, and they were not likely to mark the extraordinary elation that was upon him—such an elation as might result from the descent of a great light not necessarily related, except indirectly, to House File No. 137.

13

As the session drew on to its close, public business was more and more lost sight of in the crush of bills familiarly known as woodchucks. They were public business only in the most nominal sense.

Nearly every member had his woodchuck or woodchucks that he was personally wishful to get through. These bills were for a variety of ostensible purposes, but at least they had it in common that no woodchuck's ostensible purpose was its real purpose. They were jobs, in short, some of them pretty crooked and some downright inimical to the public welfare, but all of them very important, for one reason or another, to members personally.

They were got through by trading. Each member with a woodchuck of his own lay under a promise to vote for every other member's woodchuck. If the rules stood in the way they could be suspended any time by unanimous consent and since no member in

the plot had anything to gain by objecting, unanimous consent was pretty well assured.

The procedure was uniform. As soon as a woodchuck came back from the standing committee to which it had been sent on its first introduction, the clerk reported the title, and the member whose woodchuck it was rose and addressed the chair in these words:

"Mr. Speaker, we have here a purely local measure, of no interest to the State at large. Therefore, to save the time of the House for more important business, I ask unanimous consent that the rules be suspended and the bill be given its second and third reading and put upon its final passage."

Toward the end of the session you would hear that form of words often repeated. It always meant that a woodchuck was being speeded on its way.

Among the woodchucks, outwardly as innocent as any, was a bill for an act to amend the charter of the Village of High Falls. High Falls was a small and obscure municipality, but of course it had a perfectly good right to get its charter amended if it chose. So far the bill was without offense.

The member from that county was a nonentity by the name of Mix, utterly undistinguished and so diffident that he could hardly muster the courage to rise and say what had to be said. In fact, he made such a sorry mess of the form of words, mumbling and stumbling, that if the machinery hadn't been in so good working order and the presiding officer so ready to take things for granted there might have been a hitch right at the start. But no hitch developed at the start—it came after Mix sat down.

For he had no sooner sat down than Sven Opsahl

stood up. It was the first time—not once, heretofore, had he asked recognition.

"Mr. Speaker," he said, "I object."

His accent, though there had been no other signs, showed how far he was from being at his ease. He said "opyeckt."

14

None the less, the effect of a single objection was that of a monkey-wrench thrown into the machinery, and it came to a stop with a jerk. The House hadn't been paying much attention to the familiar procedure, but it sat up now.

"The gentleman from Gumbo County objects to a suspension of the rules," the presiding officer made known, and everybody turned to stare at the tow-headed Swede in the back row.

His confusion was plain to be seen, and it made him rather an absurd figure—like a gawky schoolboy speaking a piece. But members were too much shocked to laugh and after the shock wore off too angry. Their anger was the easier to bear, however—indeed, their resentful glances more than anything else nerved Sven to stand by his guns and see it through. Though his voice piped squawkily with the strain, and his accent was more than ever in evidence, he persisted:

"Mr. Speaker, I will explain that I have been making a study in natural history—a study of the woodchuck. I find him a wonderful animal."

Irony—and as such it fell flat. The house wasn't any more diverted by Sven's clumsy little joke than by his absurd figure.

But though so scantily encouraged, he went on, perhaps a shade more firmly:

"Mr. Speaker, in going over the list of bills passed

by the House I was surprised to find a number that I couldn't remember having heard reported, though I have paid fairly good attention. So I traced these bills back and I was still more surprised to discover that whereas they were introduced as local bills of no general interest and went through as such under a suspension of the rules and without consideration, they turned out in the end to be something altogether different. I don't know how it was done, but I intend to keep on with my studies in natural history till I find out. In the meantime no more bills shall be hurried through under a suspension of the rules by unanimous consent."

Mix was out of it—he dived, in a manner of speaking, to be heard no more and scarcely seen. But the moment Sven had finished speaking, Matlock was on his feet.

Another Matlock, his habitual suavity fallen away from him like a garment. He bounced up out of his chair and his aspect was bristling, not to say savage.

"Does the gentleman impugn the word of a member of the House?" he demanded.

Once more it was the kind of assault upon his fortitude that Sven could best defy. He had counted upon being put to the test, and he wasn't daunted. To be so confronted was enough to make him quake in his shoes, but he didn't budge.

"I have a wish," he replied, "to know just what they are trying to do with their charter up in High Falls."

"It's an insult to the whole House!" Matlock flung out, hotly. "I resent it in my own right and in behalf of the House. If the gentleman is too boorish to permit a common courtesy sanctioned by long usage, I insist that at least he withdraw his strictures."

Matlock had lost his temper, in other words, and from that circumstance Sven greatly took heart.

"May I ask the gentleman from Ramsey County what strictures?" he rejoined, sweetly.

"They are implied in the gentleman's remarks."

"I am sorry. The remarks are not important, and if they offended the gentleman I am glad to withdraw them. But my objection to the suspension of the rules will have to stand."

Matlock shook with anger.

"Mr. Speaker," he shouted, "I move that the rules be suspended, the gentleman's objections notwithstanding."

A majority of two-thirds could suspend the rules, and beyond any doubt two-thirds of the House and more wanted the rules suspended now. But Sven Opsahl, the towheaded Swede, hadn't played his last card.

"Mr. Speaker," he shouted right back, not so much violently as with a certain buoyancy, for he had no cause to be diffident any more, "I call for the *ayes* and *noes* on that motion."

"The question," said the speaker, "is on the motion to suspend the rules. The *ayes* and *noes* are called for. The clerk will call the roll."

Sven voted *no* and some few voted with him. Matlock voted *yes* and more than a few voted with him. But many were silent—though they should be of those who wished the rules suspended, they were afraid of going on record as being so minded.

The motion failed of the necessary two-thirds and was lost.

15

Rather a breezy incident, such as the newspapers delighted in reporting, but when Sven looked them over the next morning, thinking to see his name in print, he found nothing. Not a word about the little flurry.

He believed he understood. "The *Globe*," he reflected, "is Jim Hill's property out and out, and the *Pioneer Press* knows which side of its bread is buttered."

He watched the quotations of Great Northern Ore for several days, but he detected no fluctuations which might be due to plans in high places having met with unexpected reverses. He didn't understand that so well, but no doubt there was a reason.

XV

"A newer garden of creation, no primal solitude,
Dense, joyous, modern, populous millions, cities and farms,
With iron interlaced, composite, tied, many in one,
By all the world contributed—freedom's and law's and thrift's society,
The crown and teeming paradise, so far, of time's accumulations,
To justify the past."

XV

I

WHEN John Gilpin Milford breezed into Gumbo he brought, from somebody somewhere, a letter of introduction to Pick Overturf. If not otherwise more noteworthy than letters of introduction are apt to be, it quoted a prophecy of Jim Hill's and of course nothing else was needed to give it weight and authority with Pick.

In these words:

"Some day we shall smelt our own ore right here in Minnesota. We have no coal, but we have peat, billions and billions of tons of it. Though the deposits of iron in our hills should be practically unlimited I am persuaded that there is heat enough stored up in our peat-bogs to smelt it and when a way shall have been found to take advantage of these resources a new day will dawn for our wonderful State. Now we are restricted to the production of the raw ore—the smelting has to be done elsewhere, so to entail a great expense for the transportation of waste material. But when we shall have learned to make fuel of our peat we can smelt the ore right here at home. We shall be able to produce pig-iron more cheaply than it can be produced anywhere else in the world, and the forges and foundries and the kindred industries which use pig-iron will locate here in consequence and not, as now, near the coal-fields of Ohio and Pennsylvania and Illinois."

Milford had patented a process for working up the

crude peat into briquets which looked not unlike lumps of coal and which burned readily. His figures made it appear that his process wasn't so very expensive—if his figures were to be trusted he could manufacture briquets which would undersell coal. He counted upon a sufficient demand for domestic uses alone to make the venture pay right from the start, while as for the future, let Mr. Hill testify.

Milford's idea was to put up a plant in Gumbo and go to making briquets. He had chosen Gumbo because there was such an extent of bog near by. He offered to go halves with Pick—the banker to furnish the capital and Milford to turn over his patents to the firm.

Pick was captured. It looked like a big thing—so big that it nearly took his breath away. He caught Jim Hill's vision and the thought of a thousand blast furnaces burning Milford briquets was enough to banish every misgiving.

2

The plant cost around $10,000—quite a prodigious sum for Pick Overturf to raise, though he was thought to be a rich man in his day and generation. The buildings were cheap sheds, for the most part, but the machinery ran into money fast. Milford wasn't a practical mechanic and his drawings and patterns were so far misleading that some of the work had to be thrown away and done over—the bills, in short, were unnecessarily heavy. But Pick never for a moment lost faith; he found the money somehow and at length the briquets were being turned out in commercial quantities.

The first bucketful was fed into the big nickel-plated baseburner in the lobby of the bank. Baseburners were designed for hard coal only, and by that the test was especially severe. It wasn't claimed for the briquets that they would take the place of hard coal.

The public was cordially invited to be present and witness the demonstration, and the lobby was well filled with onlookers when Pick Overturf shook down the grates and poured the bucket of briquets into the hopper. They took fire promptly and burned hotly, with very little flame or smoke. Pick pinched the draft down to a point where almost any fire would have been extinguished, and he varied it up to the full blast, but the new fuel behaved well under every condition.

The banker nearly outglowed the stove, in token of his satisfaction.

"Gentlemen, the fuel of the future!" he expanded.

The briquets were sold at the plant for a dollar a ton less than western lignite and two dollars a ton less than the poorest grade of bituminous coal from the head of the lakes. Peat was a lot lighter, too,—there was nearly twice as much of it, by bulk, in a ton; and Pick, still expanding, offered to bet any man $100 that a bucketful of it would burn as long and give out as much heat as a bucketful of any coal but Pennsylvania anthracite.

The local market took to the briquets greedily. Villagers were mostly in the habit of buying from hand to mouth and their trade didn't amount to much, but the farmers bought by the ton. Of course, they had a selfish interest in helping the enterprise along, for there was hardly a farm in the vicinity which didn't

have its extent of worthless bogland which Milford's processes, should they make good, would transform into a mine of wealth.

No complaints were heard, or almost none. Once a farmer came into the bank and objected that the new fuel kept him so busy lugging out ashes he hadn't time to do any loafing, and he was afraid he might forget how. It was a fact, too, that the proportion of incombustible residue in peat was something against it. But the farmer was evidently joking, and Pick answered in kind.

"Our people," he said, "need more winter exercise, so they won't be so fat and soft when spring opens."

The demand grew. Pretty soon the plant, working to capacity, couldn't keep up with its orders and Pick talked about enlargements by another year. The two or three coalyards in the village languished and foresaw their finish.

3

But there was rough sledding ahead. Though Pick Overturf ceased not to joke with the farmers, they presently discerned a cloud of anxiety on his jovial face. There began to be whispers, started by none knew whom or with what foundation in fact, of dissension between the partners. Just why there shouldn't be entire harmony where prosperity so much abounded was something of a mystery; nevertheless the whispers persisted.

A little while longer, too, and they were being confirmed by men employed at the plant—they reported having overheard Milford and the banker threshing out their differences in a violent and angry manner. Some of the high words were repeated and they cer-

tainly sounded a good deal more like war than peace. There was no keeping the skeleton in the closet after that.

The culmination was a quarrel that would have come to blows if bystanders hadn't interfered. Milford was the first to cool off and talk sense.

"Look here, Overturf," he said, "I'll buy or sell, whichever you like. We can't go on as we're going."

Pick was slower to anger and not so easily appeased—his answer was to turn on his heel and walk off. But right away negotiations were opened through intermediaries, and in just a few days Milford packed up and left, to be seen no more in those parts. Nobody was very sorry. He hadn't made an especially good impression with his breezy, pushing, boastful ways, and nearly everybody who cared about the falling out was glad Pick had bought and not sold.

Nevertheless, the prosperity of the enterprise departed with Milford's departure. It might be because no other man knew so well how to get results out of the machinery, or it might be a turn in the luck, but anyhow it began to appear that the business was on the down grade and slumping fast.

The first step Pick took after he gained control was to raise the price of briquets fifty cents a ton. He ran along at that figure for a month or so, and then posted another advance of fifty cents, making the peat cost as much as the lignite. Lignite was poor stuff, low in carbon content and high in slate and other forms of slag, but here and there and more and more consumers were saying they would about as soon have it as the peat which Pick was turning out.

The amount of it being that the briquets, whatever

the reason might be, were not holding up to their first quality. Instead of the hard, glossy, compact lumps that clinked in your shovel, they were crumbly and soft, they turned to mud if they got wet, and they had to be fed into a fire with the utmost care or they would put it out.

Pick's anxiety grew on him. The joviality left his face altogether, and if he joked with anybody about anything it was in a forced way. The plant caught up with its orders and began to accumulate a supply of briquets. They were stored in sheds where the rain couldn't get at them, but the moisture in the air was enough to cause them to disintegrate and in a few weeks they were just so much dirt—not nearly as good fuel as the crude peat which the early settlers had cut out of the bogs and dried in the sun.

Pick was at the plant more than he was at the bank, but nothing he could do availed to avert the disaster. A long cold spell, when the bogs froze five or six feet deep, afforded a pretext for shutting down the works and they were shut down. The men were paid off and told that operations would be resumed as soon as the weather permitted, but it was the general belief that unless Pick could enlist additional capital in the project no more briquets would be made.

From the first he had been proud to speak of the source of his inspiration—Jim Hill's prophecy. Pick quoted the prophecy in season and out of season, and now, in the hour of his need and particularly when he was much away from home, often as long as a week at a stretch, his neighbors guessed that he was trying to get Jim Hill interested.

But if such was his quest nothing came of it—he

came home empty of hand and heavy of heart. He got off the train after his last absence and neighbors who happened to be at the station knew at a glance—whatever it might be that he had gone after they perceived that he had failed to bring it back.

They had never seen him so cast down, so listless, so seemingly tired out and indifferent.

Still, for some reason, they never once thought of the bank as being in peril, and when it didn't open its doors of a morning as usual a thunderbolt out of a clear sky couldn't have astounded Gumbo more. A card nailed up at the door informed whomever it might concern that the institution was in the hands of the State examiner of banks and the morning train brought out a deputy from the examiner's office to take charge and go over the books.

He had to shoulder his way through a dense throng of villagers and farmers gathered about the card and staring at it as if they fancied they might, by that, see farther into the mystery.

4

There had to be a receiver for the bank and Sven Opsahl's appointment to the post came about somewhat deviously.

The State examiner and his department were under fire, as it happened, by reason of sundry scandals growing out of the manner in which insolvent banks had been administered. It wasn't a new manner by any means—always, in fact, the usage had been, when a receiver was to be placed in charge of a bank, to look upon the appointment as a political plum to be dispensed in payment for party services already rendered

or to strengthen somebody's fences for the future and the examiner now in office had not departed from the tradition. But it was his luck to be the incumbent when the system broke down and so many irregularities were brought to light that for the time being, as by way of works meet for repentance, he was making no partisan selections. The deputy who went out to take charge of Pick's bank had his instructions to look the ground over and find a receiver in Gumbo if he could, but whatever else he did he was not to recommend a Republican. The examiner, himself of that faith, was determined to give no ground for saying that he had played politics.

The fact that the bank was only a small plum and not very juicy had its bearing. There wasn't going to be any big money in the job and its bestowal upon somebody outside the fold of the faithful, while bearing witness to the department's good faith, entailed no great sacrifice.

Sven Opsahl was personally known to the deputy. During the session of the Legislature some investigation he was making had taken the member from Gumbo County to the examiner's records and by reason of the acquaintance thus casually formed the deputy had no sooner got his instructions than he thought of Sven. Inquiry on the ground developed no serious objections and in a day or two another card in its purport hardly less astounding than the first was nailed up to the door of the bank. Sven Opsahl's appointment as receiver was as unlooked-for as the bank's insolvency had been.

He took charge at once and the deputy went back to St. Paul.

5

The bank was in a sorry condition. It had been in a manner looted, and there were virtually no assets left. In the files Sven found some sound paper, but most of the good loans had been called in—to furnish Pick with the cash to keep his peatmill going. That was the rathole into which the funds had been poured like water. The receiver's first care was to go over the resources that had been given him to make the most of, and he doubted if they would yield enough to pay a tenth part of what the bank owed. The deposits amounted to near $50,000—money owing the neighbors who had trusted Pick, some more and some less, and they would be lucky to get a dollar in ten.

Sven hated to give out news so disheartening. Neighbors still trusted Pick Overturf. On every hand you heard it confidently predicted that no man would lose a penny—every deposit would be paid in full. The wish was to some extent the father of the thought. Neighbors, like other mortals, could believe what they liked to believe. But loyalty to their esteemed banker counted for something, too. Pick had never failed them yet—he wouldn't fail them now.

Sven hated to shatter their illusions, and so he delayed telling them the truth. As often as they asked him about the assets he evaded a direct answer. He could always say, if no better pretext offered, that he was still working at the books and could quote no exact figures. He studied to be comforting.

But necessarily there were limits—no illusion could be made to last forever. The first shock left the community bewildered, and bewilderment gave way to in-

credulity; but though incredulity inured to the advantage of Pick's good name, it had in its turn to give way. Certain signs were not to be blinked, the receiver's shifty reticence among them, but the sign that counted for most was Pick's own demeanor. Why, if there was any chance that he might get back on his feet and pay up, was he keeping so out of sight and avoiding his neighbors as if he would rather not look them in the face?

The hard feeling wasn't the work of a minute or an hour or a day even. Perhaps it was the harder for that when it did come into being. Voices which had defended Pick and predicted that nobody was going to lose a penny by him—they grew faint and other voices were heard—voices that accused Pick, by hints at first, but right away without beating about the bush. If Pick Overturf wasn't a crook, what then? If any man was to be judged by his fruits, how should he avoid judgment?

Not once since the doors of the bank failed to open that first morning had Pick been seen. So long as they pitied him, neighbors could believe that he was merely ashamed; blaming him, they believed he was afraid. He was afraid, and his fear was the confession of his guilt.

6

Nobody knew how it was faring with Pick. If he was sick, at any rate the doctor hadn't been called, so that there was no information to be had from that common source. Womenfolks used to visiting back and forth visited at the big house no more—somehow, they had been made to feel that they weren't wanted.

Especially after Weese came home.

Weese had drifted farther and farther away from Gumbo, and when her father's calamity came upon him she was employed in Detroit. You heard that she threw up a job paying her $50 a week in order to come home—towering wages for a woman in those primitive times. You wondered. There had never been any sentiment about Weese, and from the day Pick fell heir to his fortune she was thought to have hardened toward her family and as good as cast them off. But here she was back home.

The Overturfs had kept two hired girls and both were dismissed—Weese was doing the housework. Every Monday she was seen hanging out the family washing. She worked in the garden, too, digging up weeds and spraying the plants. In the evening, just at dark, she hurried down into the village and made her purchases for the household—the cheapest groceries in small quantities, a little sliver of the commonest cut of meat.

Folks were ready to be civil with Weese, though the hard feeling against her father had risen to such a pitch; but she gave them no opportunity. Having made her purchases she gathered them up in her arms and hurried back home with her eyes on the ground, looking neither to the right nor the left. If folks felt sorry for her, it wasn't because she made any bid for pity. In her proud, independent way, she was holding them at a distance.

Once, in the very doorway of the post-office, so that he had to stand back to let her pass, Weese and Sven Opsahl met and he gave her greeting in proper form—he couldn't have done otherwise without being rude. There were a dozen witnesses to the little scene and

they could testify that Sven behaved with perfect propriety. But Weese didn't answer him or lift her eyes or by the slightest token show that she was aware of his existence. If she didn't mean to snub him, it was hard to guess what she meant.

The village blamed her roundly for that. Even though she should cut everybody else, she might have been more considerate of Sven, when he was doing so much to save something out of the wreck of her father's estate. It had just that day become known that he was serving without pay in order that the salvage might be the greater—serving without pay and neglecting his own business into the bargain. Certainly, he deserved better than to be passed by so coldly by a direct beneficiary of his generosity.

Sven's generosity stood out the more by contrast with Pick Overturf's selfish indifference, or what looked like selfish indifference to the neighbors. They were asking, pretty pointedly, whether Pick intended to turn over the big house to help pay his debts. Of course, he was under no legal compulsion to do so—since the house was his homestead, the law let him keep it if he chose. Neighbors whom he owed, however, and who considered that he had misled them and betrayed their trust—they didn't think it looked well in him to keep anything back, law or no law—morally, at least, he had no right to keep anything back. But whatever his intentions might be, he hadn't given up the big house as yet—he was still living in it much as if he didn't owe a dollar in the world.

7

Among the assets of the bank were several parcels of land which had been pledged in security for loans

and which, the loans having defaulted, the bank had taken over by foreclosure. Pretty poor property, for the most part, in no instance worth enough to pay back the loan, and so much the poorest of the lot as to be by that distinguished in the wretched company was the notorious Witchgrass Forty.

The nickname was opprobrious, but well deserved. Far or near no other piece of land had been so thoroughly subjugated by the pest—it was lost beyond any possibility of reclamation. The roots of the witchgrass had so infested the soil that a plow couldn't be forced into it.

In a way that asset was a credit to Pick, for though it said nothing for his judgment it testified to his good heart. It had been the farm of a forlorn tenderfoot bitten by the back-to-the-land bug—he had tried in vain to wring a living out of the tract and when, impoverished and broken in health, he wished to go back to his old home in the East, Pick had advanced him the wherewithal, though knowing that the loan would never be repaid and that the land wouldn't make good the pledge.

In another aspect the Witchgrass Forty was something of a joke. When a preliminary list of assets was posted and it was set down with the rest, folks laughed. It wasn't worth ten cents. No man in his sober senses would take it as a gift.

It cornered in a marsh—a stagnant pool mantled over with a disgusting scum. Wiregrass, though the least fastidious of plants, wouldn't grow there, and cattle had to be very thirsty before they would drink out of it. Even the frogs and snakes seemed to shun it.

But in these days a boy and his dog ran a gopher into a hole near the margin of the pool, and that was the beginning of great things. The dog fell to digging with immense energy and the boy, looking on, observed that while the top soil was sandy and easily thrown out, when the dog dug deeper he brought up a peculiar brown gravel, so heavy that he couldn't do much with it. The gravel was unlike anything the boy had ever seen and he took some of it away with him to show his father.

His father was Tom Gilpatrick, buyer at a wheat elevator in Gumbo, but formerly employed in the Vermilion mines, up near Duluth. He needed nobody to tell him that the heavy brown gravel was iron ore.

He took the specimen to Sven Opsahl. If there was iron under the Witchgrass Forty Sven ought to be informed.

8

The news was bound to leak out—a discovery so momentous couldn't be kept dark very long. The news leaked out and was as prodigiously magnified as such news is apt to be.

Directly Gumbo was very much in the public eye and its people lived in a kind of dream. A community where farming had hitherto been the only interest was suddenly transformed into a mining camp—in prospect if not in reality.

The place was inundated with strangers of unfamiliar aspect—hustlers who hustled fiercely from morning till night and far into the night. Their talk was of options and prospects and they swarmed out over the Witchgrass Forty and lands adjacent like flies over fresh meat. Farmers caught the fever and

forgot their crops. The slow process of amassing wealth by earning it no longer had any attractions for them—they couldn't see anything but the opportunity to get rich quick and without having to lift a finger.

You heard tall stories. The Witchgrass Forty was where the great discovery had been made, and though none doubted that the whole country was underlaid with iron, most of the talk was about that particular tract. From being the most worthless of parcels it took on in just a few hours a fabulous value. Parties were quoted as saying they would willingly pay $100,000 for the property just as it stood, and while their identity wasn't clearly revealed you could understand why—they weren't ready to come out into the open just yet. It wasn't long till neighbors, listening dazedly, were given to understand that Sven Opsahl, as receiver of the bank, had been actually offered $100,000 for the Witchgrass Forty.

You could hear anything, in short, and nothing was too wild or improbable to command belief. That speculative interests were not afraid to lay a bet of $100,000 on the chance of there being iron in paying quantity and quality under the Witchgrass Forty seemed by no means preposterous. Speculation was a species of gambling, anyhow, and what was a hundred thousand as against the possibility that they might pay back millions?

A hundred thousand dollars would liquidate every claim against the bank and leave enough over to save Pick Overturf from coming to want in his old age. Neighbors thought first of the prospect of getting their money back, but, being warmed by it, they could think too, in spite of the hard feeling they had so recently

entertained, of Pick in his old age beyond the reach of want.

9

Gumbo had its Main Street, likewise its Jefferson Avenue, and these two thoroughfares intersected. The big house was pretty well out Jefferson Avenue, to the eastward, but the morning Pick and Weese wended their way downtown together they were not seen until they turned the corner into Main Street.

They walked slowly and the word flew on before them—they were headed for the bank, and by the time they reached it villagers had hastened up from every direction and there was quite a crowd waiting. Of course, they scented something in the wind. Moreover, though it wasn't so very long since Pick had ventured abroad, a good deal of water had run under the bridge in the meanwhile and the mere sight of him was something in the nature of a novelty. Neighbors wanted to see what he looked like after what he had been through.

They beheld a man suddenly stricken in years. Pickering Overturf had aged though he was only a few weeks older. His hair, never worse than iron-gray, was no grayer now, but he had let his beard grow and it was white as snow. That alone was enough to change his face almost beyond recognition, but there was more—wrinkles and the sagging lines of melancholy where mirth and laughter had held sway. His face was sadly shrunken, too, where it had been round and smooth, and it was the color of parchment where it had been rosy. Neighbors who had been his neighbors always vowed that if they had met Pick in a strange place they should never have known him.

He made a pitiful figure, and more pitiful than anything was the way he walked—shamblingly, with shoulders bowed together, and so feebly that Weese was fairly holding him up. A stricken, shrunken old man, and as he drew near, the crowd parted and formed a lane to the door of the bank—a mark of sympathy if not of respect.

In silence. Not a word was spoken by anybody.

10

The bank was open for such business as it might properly transact. No deposits were being received and no checks cashed, but there was more or less coming and going and anybody might enter who cared to do so.

The door swung with a spring and Weese pushed it back and held it while she helped her father up over the threshold. Neighbors failed not to observe that Pick lifted his feet heavily, as if he had but partial control over them. An ominous symptom. If he had already suffered a stroke, and the way he lifted his feet indicated nothing less, no telling how near his end might be.

There was nobody in the cage at the front of the bank and they passed on through, Pick hobbling slowly and Weese keeping pace with him, back to the room in the rear where in better days the president had been wont to deal with affairs demanding privacy. Sven Opsahl was in there, seated at the table and faced the other way, but he heard them and rose hastily as they paused in the doorway.

"May we come in?" Weese asked, with a wan smile.

Sven was covered with confusion and the best answer

he could muster was an incoherent jumble of words. But the effect was to bid them welcome after a fashion, and he drew forward and set out a cushioned chair—the chair to which aforetime Pick had ushered any particularly choice customer.

He sank into it now with evident relief. By the signs, he was about spent. Sven remained standing and, though he set out a chair for her as well, so did Weese.

Pick was the first to speak, but not till after an interval while he panted for breath.

"The Witchgrass Forty!" he gasped, weakly, as soon as he was sufficiently recovered.

Sven was less and less at his ease, and at the mention of the Witchgrass Forty he flushed hotly. He glanced at Weese, but when he encountered her eyes regarding him steadfastly he looked down, saying nothing.

"Is it a fact that iron has been found there?" Pick inquired, still with an effort and breathing hard.

"Yes, sir—iron—that is—yes, iron has been found there," Sven assented, stammering awkwardly.

Pick rallied his strength.

"I hear that you can sell the property for $100,000!" he broke forth, in a strangely loud voice.

His vehemence startled Sven, so that he involuntarily drew back a little. Weese's eyes, level and steadfast, still regarded him; and the old man's, burning like two torches, were upon him too.

But he found no words wherewith to answer, and his silence had the effect of lashing Pick to fresh vehemence. He clutched the arms of the chair and jerked himself up stiffly.

"Why don't you sell? Tell me—why don't you sell?" he cried out with prodigious force, though his voice went thin under the strain.

Sven fumbled nervously and to no purpose among the papers on the table.

"I have waited," he confessed, as some penitent might own up to a fault, "until I could find out just what I am selling."

Pick's eyes shot scorn.

"What difference does it make?" he demanded angrily. "What is it to you, so long as somebody wants to buy?"

"What if the property is worth nothing?"

"Caveat emptor!" screamed the old man, so violently that Weese laid her hand on his to restrain him. "Let the buyer take care of himself! If you can sell, don't wait! Not a minute! The bubble may burst. Can you sell? Tell me that!"

Their eyes accused him, and once more he was the penitent confessing.

"I have had offers," he faltered.

Weese caught her breath. Pick bent nearer—intent—childishly eager.

"As much as $100,000?"

"No exact figures were mentioned, Mr. Overturf. The negotiations didn't get that far."

"Why not?"

"I told the parties that I couldn't talk business till I knew better what I was about. What if the Witchgrass Forty should be worth a million? If I were to sell—"

Pick lurched forward out of the chair, to his knees. He seized Weese's hand in both his own.

"Kneel down, girl!" he commanded her. "Kneel down here in the dust at Mr. Opsahl's feet and join with me in praying him to sell—now—while he has the chance. Kiss his feet! See—I will kiss his feet!"

The old man actually bowed his head to the floor, and would have fallen prostrate only that they caught him and lifted him up. Too weak to speak, he lay back in the chair with his eyes shut, his breath almost gone.

Over him Sven and Weese confronted. She was weeping and he was shaken as a reed in the wind.

"Is it that he asks so much?" she protested, brokenly. "Is that why you refuse—a dying old man—"

"Weese," he answered, "I leave it to you—I will do whatever you say."

II

The trains are two hours apart and if you care to stop over in Gumbo so long Alf Alfs will be glad to tell you about the iron boom and what came of it.

Alf drives the free bus that meets the trains for the Nordstrom Hotel, but he is never too busy to talk. He was born in the land of the midnight sun, where Eskimos and Laplanders were his not distant neighbors, but for more than forty years he has been trying to be a Yankee and his endeavors have by no means gone for nothing. He is proud of his command of Yankee slang, though he still retains enough of the exotic idiom to bring about, at times, rather bewildering effects.

From him you learn that the iron boom whiffed out about as abruptly as it came into being. The brown gravel turned out to be nothing but bog ore—a stray drift brought down from a real deposit somewhere and of no commercial importance.

As for that conference in the bank between Pick Overturf and Weese and Sven Opsahl, nobody but the parties ever knew just what took place. Everybody knows, however, that at the peak of the boom the Witchgrass Forty might have been sold for a lot of money, and it is the general belief that the property would have been so sold if Pick hadn't got up out of a sickbed to go down and prevail upon Sven to hold off.

After so long Gumbo folks think of Pick as having been just that square a man. He had done a wrong and he would be glad to right it, but in order to right it he wouldn't do another wrong.

"Ay tank he ban afraid some feller get stung," Alf Alfs testifies, soberly.

Pick had another stroke at the bank and never spoke a word afterwards, though he lived along for several years.

Sven Opsahl? Well, the Gumbo *Voice* is still his property and it makes him some sort of living. Yonder he goes now. Yes, that chunky youngster is his son. The boy favors his mother's people—his Grandfather Overturf especially. "Expecially," says Alf, marshaling the word with a confident flourish.

Pick, if you never saw him, had just such a round, jolly face.

But the bank—of course, with the collapse of the iron boom, the bank didn't pay out?

"Yah—he pay out," Alf assures you. "Yim Hill—he come across. It ban Yim Hill got Peek Ofertorf started to make peat, and van Peek go bust Yim Hill van he hear about him he say py golly Ay pay. Can you beat him?"

Alf's old eyes glow. He is mustering his resources to say something that you will have cause to remember.

"Yim Hill—Yim Hill, Ay tank he ban pur-r-ty goot feller!"

THE END